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UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

مركز دراسات الشرق الأوسط  
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CENTRE FOR MIDDLE EASTERN  
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## A STATE WITHOUT A NATION

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is to describe the development of the Lebanese republic, and to provide some basis of understanding for the contemporary condition of Lebanon. Although its recent history has been characterised by political violence, I have sought to concentrate on other themes.

A major feature of Lebanese history has been the apparent domination of an entrenched establishment over the political and economic system. Carolyn Lea Gates' Ph.D. thesis 'The formation of the political economy of modern Lebanon: The state and the economy from colonialism to independence, 1939-1952', provides an excellent analysis of the basis of economic and political power in the emerging Lebanese republic. Other important texts include *Les classes sociales au Liban* written by Dubar and Nasr, and *Merchants and migrants in nineteenth-century Beirut* by Fawaz. A wide range of texts describing the nature of the Lebanese political system prior to the crisis of 1958 has been published, of which *The Lebanese crisis, a documentary study* edited by Agwani, on the struggle between President Camille Chamoun and his opponents' is particularly useful. The period following Chamoun's presidency, generally referred to as the Chehabist era, is dealt with in a number of journal articles as well as in most texts. The most detailed and perceptive study of the period is perhaps *The precarious republic: political modernization in Lebanon* by M.C. Hudson. For a radical view of the period since 1967, *Dynamics of conflict* by B.J. Odeh provides a clear argument for the causes of the disintegration of Lebanon. A counter-view is offered by K.S. Salibi in *The modern history of Lebanon*. Although *The tragedy of Lebanon* by J. Randal perhaps fails to provide an analytical interpretation of the forces behind the conflict, it imparts a sense of the dramatic events which shook Lebanon.

Although this study has been based upon a number of general reference works, journal articles and examination of newspaper extracts, perhaps the most useful source I have encountered is *The making of modern Lebanon*, by H. Cobban.

Albeit based upon a wide range of studies of modern Lebanese history, the following text is my view. I therefore accept responsibility for the argument contained herein, and any factual errors.

D. Stoten

## 1. THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEBANESE REPUBLIC, 1920-1952

The Lebanon was formally recognised as a distinct geo-political entity through the San Remo Agreement of April 1920. Lebanon was not initially established as an independent state, rather it was deemed to be a mandated territory of the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> The concept of mandated territories for the Middle East arose after the defeat and subsequent collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The notion of mandatory rule represented a compromise between the victorious allied powers, principally Britain, France and the United States. The Wilsonian vision of autonomous independent republics was countered by a disguised form of neo-imperialism. Although the mandate directives limited the scope of British and French power, after the presidency of Woodrow Wilson the United States withdrew into a form of isolationism which enabled the imperialist powers to act virtually unopposed. The French mandate was proclaimed by the League of Nations on 29 February 1925; until the final withdrawal of French power in 1946, it was the French who would dominate Lebanon.

During the Ottoman Empire, the French had combined significant economic interests in the Near East with a mission to spread French culture and extend the influence of France. The preparedness of France to intervene in Levantine politics had been demonstrated during the civil war in Mount Lebanon during 1860. Britain recognised the French position in the Levant through the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916 in which France was 'promised' greater influence in 'geographical Syria'. Although the mandate existed in theory, the French were determined to assert their neo-imperial power. In simple terms, the mandate changed the role of France in the Levant from guardian of Syria's minorities to governing power.

French rule in the Levant was conceived in terms of 'divide and rule'. In this fashion France broke up the territory under its control into mini-states partly based upon the religious cleavages in Syrian society. The creation of an Alawite 'State of Latakia', a Druze government in the Hawran, and the formation of Lebanon as a state, were presented by France as a responsible development. The French asserted that they were fulfilling their conventional role as protector of Syria's minorities from the Sunni Muslims of Damascus. Whatever their motives, the primary effect of the division of Syria was to make colonial rule more simple. According to Longrigg: 'they entered upon their mandatory duties prepared to serve Syria, as they saw it, sincerely and arduously, but strictly upon their own terms'.<sup>2</sup>

The scope of French power in the mandated territories was all pervasive. In Longrigg's words: 'they believed their duty to include the cautious bestowal of minimum power on the Syrians and Lebanese, while themselves retaining authority on every detail of constitutional and administrative life'.<sup>3</sup> In Lebanon executive power resided with the French High Commissioner at Beirut, who was supported by a French-staffed administration. Moreover, the policy-making process effectively instituted French control over the political process. The structure of the policy formulation process reinforced French control over Lebanon. Although a Representative Council was created, it possessed no independent power and served mainly to legitimise the 'status quo'. The Lebanese Constitution of May 1926, although presented as a concession to Lebanese aspirations, was primarily designed to maintain French influence. The French were prepared to initiate political development because of their association with the Francophile Maronite Christians.

The relationship between the mandatory authorities and the Maronite political leadership provided the keystone to French policy in Lebanon. Although the cultural linkages between the Maronites and France were centuries old, the political alliance can be traced to the formation of the Lebanese State. Even before the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the notion of 'Lebanism' as presented by Bishop Nikulas Murad and Tanyus Shidyaq had attracted French interest. The mandate not only enabled France to create a 'Christian refuge', it also allowed the French to bargain for a dependent ally in the region. This association was primarily conceived as an imperial patron-client relationship.

The formation of the Lebanese Republic reflected the political understanding between the French and the leadership of the Maronite community. Although a purely Christian regime was not created, the State of 'Greater Lebanon' reflected the political primacy of the Christians. The viability of Lebanon was to be ensured by the inclusion of the fertile agricultural hinterland of the anti-Lebanon range and the enterprising towns on the Mediterranean Sea. However, this extension of the territorial boundaries of Lebanon destabilised the political complexion of the new state. Together with the Druze- and Christian-populated areas of Mount Lebanon and the Chouf, 'Greater Lebanon' included the largely Sunni-inhabited coastal towns and the Akkar, and the predominantly Shi'ite regions of the Beqaa Valley and Jebel Amil. Whereas during 1913 the population of 'Little Lebanon' totalled 414,800 of whom 329,482 were Christians, in 1923 the population of 'Greater Lebanon' amounted to 628,863 persons.<sup>4</sup> This extension of Lebanese nationality was of profound importance to the future course of the Lebanese political system. Whereas 'Little Lebanon' was largely a Druze-Christian area, 'Greater Lebanon' was a patchwork of religious communities. The viability of the Lebanese State was as a consequence dependent upon a wider and more disunited public. In simple

terms, the preservation of the State of Lebanon depended upon some form of consensual government.

The constitutional arrangement of 1926 was an attempt to create the essential frame-work for Lebanese consensus. The principle of power-sharing between the various communities was contained in Article 95 of the Constitution:

Provisionally ... and in order to promote harmony and justice, the communities will be equitably represented in government employment and in the composition of the ministry without jeopardizing the good of the State.<sup>5</sup>

In this sense, the religio-political cleavages within the embryonic nation-state were institutionalised by the Constitution. Instead of establishing a non-sectarian and secular governmental system, the political establishment of Lebanon had moved to protect their politico-economic primacy. In this fashion, 'confessionalism' was a disguised form of political suppression. Essentially the main reference-point in the confessional system was inter-sect rivalry rather than class conflict. Although it would be inaccurate to compare the socio-economic complexion of Lebanon with European models of class conflict, the political accord established after 1926 did reflect the role of the politico-economic hierarchy in Lebanese society.

The exercise of political autonomy was restricted by the French mandatory authorities. Although they were anxious to fashion an inter-sect political system, it was evident that the Francophile Christians were to predominate. This concern was demonstrated by the appointment of Lebanon's first President, the Greek Orthodox Charles Dabbas. Although Dabbas constructed a political alliance with the Sunni jurist, Mohammed Jisr, his appointments to the office of Prime Minister were Maronite. This leading role for the Christians inevitably estranged part of Lebanon's Muslim community. The census of 1932 had demonstrated that the Christians enjoyed only a small majority, with 51.3 per cent of the population.<sup>6</sup> On balance, the Muslim leadership, especially the Pan-Syrian Sunnis, believed that the Lebanese system was unfair and indeed illegitimate.

The formation of the State of Lebanon was perceived by the Sunni community as a denial of their right to self-determination. The Sunnis, once the leading sect during the Ottoman Empire, had been subordinated by the establishment of a Lebanese republic to a secondary political position within the new state. Their separation from Syria compounded the political grievances of Lebanon's Sunni population. The formation of a State of Syria during 1936 incorporating the once separate Hawran and Latakia states into Damascus and Aleppo encouraged the Sunnis to press for the integration of Muslim



Lebanon into Syria. The formation of the Syrian State had been part of the French government's attempt to conclude a treaty arrangement with Syrian nationalists involving a gradual withdrawal from the Levant. The prospect of a similar accord with Lebanon, and the likelihood of a Christian-dominated regime there, provoked the Sunnis to agitate more vigorously. During March 1936, a group of Muslim leaders convened the 'Conference of the Coast' at Beirut. The 'Conference' vainly demanded the incorporation of predominantly Muslim areas into Syria. However, the main consequence of this Muslim agitation was a swift conclusion of a Franco-Lebanese Treaty in November 1936. The treaty not only set out the basis for a phased withdrawal of the mandatory authorities, but affirmed the principle of inter-sect power sharing.

The notion of power-sharing was fundamentally an élitist concept and was related to the socio-economic structure of Lebanon. The composition of the 'political establishment' was largely defined in terms of two distinct social categories. The traditional leadership in the rural provinces were the quasi-feudal notables, called *zu'amā'* (sing. *za'īm*). In the towns, such as Beirut, the rising political aspirants originated from the successful business community. The establishment was anxious to maintain this position of primacy and, consequently, the political regime which was set up reflected the political interests of this elite. This assertion can be substantiated by reference to the power, responsibility and legitimacy of the State. In simple terms, the leading Lebanese politicians rejected the notion of an interventionist state. During the period of the mandate these politicians cautioned against the imposition of 'excessive' French power because, apart from its possible emotive connotations, it increased the prominence of the state over Lebanese society. This 'laissez-faire' preoccupation of the leading Lebanese politicians, in respect of the role of the state, reflected not only socio-economic concerns, but also their dominant economic philosophy.

The philosophy of the free-market economy was characteristic of the emerging political elite in Lebanon, during the period of the mandate. The economy of Lebanon was based upon a mixture of agriculture and commerce. However, since the Western economic penetration of the Middle East during the nineteenth century, Beirut had assumed increasing importance as a commercial and trading centre linking the interior with Europe, and beyond. Initially, Beirut's role in the global economy had revolved around the Lebanese silk industry. The French, in particular, had invested heavily in the silk industry and exploited Lebanon's resources of the silk-worm. Despite the decline of the Lebanese silk industry, the economic legacy of sericulture remained to condition later economic development, for as Gates has said: 'the silk industry multiplied Lebanon's dependence upon France, particularly Lyon, and it was instrumental in developing Beirut's export sector and related services of finance,

insurance and shipping'.<sup>7</sup> The Lebanon was, even as early as the period of the French mandate, already a major commercial centre.

The development of the Lebanese economy was founded upon the tertiary sector and the import-export trade. The mandate was viewed by France as a means of exercising greater control over the Lebanese economy, and the demands of the United States for an 'open door' to the Lebanese economy were resisted by the mandatory authorities, who introduced a trading policy preferential to France. This French-imposed tariff policy, which protected French interests, tended to stifle domestic Lebanese economic growth outside the tertiary sector. The Lebanon, and in particular Beirut, served as a transit point for trade with the Syrian interior;<sup>8</sup> during 1925-1939, up to 80 per cent of all Syro-Lebanese imports entered through Beirut.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the conclusion of a Syro-Lebanese Customs Union during the mandate strengthened the role of Beirut as a major component in the economic infrastructure of the Middle East.

The re-orientation of the Lebanese economy was demonstrated by the diminished importance of agriculture. Initially, the main problem relating to agriculture was the lack of credit finance and the inability of the Lebanese to invest in more sophisticated production techniques. The mandatory authorities attempted to solve this malaise in the domestic economy by the establishment of state-organised credit facilities. In 1938, the 'Société de Crédit Agricole et Industriel du Liban' was founded with capital of L.S£ 100,000. This government agency provided the essential service of guaranteed loans at 4.8 per cent interest, as well as non-guaranteed loans at 8.5 per cent, for those Lebanese willing to invest in agriculture. Despite this attempt to encourage a new 'class' of farmers, the main features of Lebanon's agricultural system remained intact. The complicated nature of property rights and the ownership of land militated against the formation of a European-style farming class. Furthermore, because of restrictions on the levels of government loans, potential independent farmers were unable to utilise the SCAIL loan-system. In general, it was the major landowning notables who gained. As a consequence, the agricultural sector of the economy was further controlled by the *zu'amā'* and their politico-economic influence strengthened.

The outbreak of a war in Europe, in September 1939, was to affect the course of Lebanese politics and ultimately transform the economic position of Lebanon. The defeat of France by Nazi Germany in 1940 threw open the diplomatic and strategic position of the Lebanon as a mandated territory. In a pre-emptive drive against Axis penetration into Lebanon, British and Free French forces invaded the Levant during June 1941. On 14 July 1941, an armistice was signed between the forces of the Vichy regime and the Allied army. From this juncture, the responsibility for Lebanon was assumed by the Free French and the British. The Allies promised that the mandate would be terminated and full

independence would be granted to Lebanon and Syria. Within this general proclamation, however, there existed a difference of emphasis between the British and Free French relating to the period of transition. Apart from the diplomatic struggle between the Allies, this transitional period was dominated by a transformation in the economy of Lebanon.

The Second World War engendered significant economic development in Lebanon and intermeshed the Lebanon within a capitalist-orientated world economic order. The development of Lebanon was partly due to the protection afforded to domestic enterprise during the War and also attributable to the 'guardianship' of the Western powers, notably Britain and the United States. The principal agency of Western economic support for Lebanon was the Anglo-American Middle East Supply Centre. This organisation aimed to create the conditions for development by providing transportation facilities, sponsoring industrial enterprise and, perhaps most important, encouraging intra-regional trade. The Lebanon emerged from the war into a new and more stable world economic order. The new approach adopted by the West, described as the 'Bretton Woods' economic system, provided greater assurance for the developing Lebanese economy. The world economy appeared ordered; the United States, supported by Britain, was prepared to assume some responsibility for controlling the post-war economic recovery. It was within this favourable international economic climate that the Lebanon emerged as an economy based on service industries and trade.

The propensity of Lebanon's business community towards a service-orientated economy was accelerated during the Second World War. Although domestic industrial output increased during the war, this was largely an artificial consequence of the wartime economy in Lebanon. The underlying and persistent changes in the Lebanese economy related to the influx of capital into the Levant. Between 1940 and 1945, £90 million were spent by the Allied occupation forces in Lebanon.<sup>10</sup> This influx of money represented a net capital inflow into the Lebanese economy generating wealth, speculation and enterprise. Moreover, because a 'War Profits Tax' was poorly enforced, much of this monetary inflow remained within the private sector. Although an Income Tax Law was introduced in December 1944, the levels of taxation were minimal and did not dramatically affect the distribution of wealth. The eventual accumulation of LS£ 500 million<sup>11</sup> by the service sector not only generated further economic growth but reinforced the socio-economic position of the business community. As a result, the impact of the wartime economy must be viewed in terms of strengthening the politico-economic standing of the entrepreneurs in Lebanon.

The political climate of wartime Lebanon reflected the growing influence of the urban bourgeoisie, as well as the traditional pre-eminence of the provincial *zu'amā'*. The political spectrum was characterised by the formation of

coalition parties. The appellation 'party' was a misnomer: in practice these groupings were little more than alliances of convenience between notables, devoid of any substantive ideological rationale and possessing no organisational basis. The Lebanese political system was based upon the patron-client relationship of the *za'im* (sing. of *zu'amā'*) and his clientele. The *za'im* was obliged to canvass in favour of his constituency for government projects, to provide patronage, hospitality and occasional subsidy for his supporters and compete for the spoils of administrative largesse. In return, a notable's clientele demonstrated social deference and proffered unswerving political support.

The contest between Emil Eddé and Bishara al-Khoury personified the major political debate in Lebanon during the period of the mandate. Eddé originated from the insular and predominantly Maronite Christian area of northern Lebanon. The political philosophy of Eddé reflected this constituency; for Eddé, Lebanese nationalism was essentially Christian supremacy. In contrast, Bishara al-Khoury aimed at some form of *modus vivendi* between Lebanon's sectarian communities: a concern which reflected his political constituency. Unlike Eddé, Khoury represented a mixed sectarian area in southern Lebanon. In 1936, with the assistance of the mandatory authorities, Eddé was able to assume the presidency of Lebanon. As a result of the war, however, the basis of Eddé's tenure was invalidated. The occupation forces, particularly the British, pushed for a compromise leader for post-war Lebanon.

The crisis of 1943 originated in a reluctance on behalf of the French to withdraw from Lebanon, and relinquish their support for Eddé. The French, in an attempt to suppress legislation designed to end the mandate, arrested Khoury and his government: a move which united all Lebanese public opinion behind Khoury. The massive public demonstrations which followed forced the French to release Khoury and his ministers on 22 November 1943. The release of Khoury represented the effective, as well as symbolic, termination of the French mandate over Lebanon, and, as a result, Khoury emerged from the crisis as a national hero, perhaps the only major political personality capable of unifying and leading the Lebanese into the era of independence.

The primary political achievement of Bishara al-Khoury, apart from his victory over the French, was the formulation of the National Pact, which was conceived as the basis upon which Lebanon's sectarian communities might unite to form a Lebanese Nation. The Pact was designed both to reassure Lebanon's Christians and to attract increased Muslim participation in the political system. The Pact, proclaimed by Khoury on 21 September 1943 during his inaugural address to the Chamber of Deputies, contained the provisions for the distribution of the offices of State in an independent Lebanon: the Christians were to maintain their position of primacy through the 'reservation' of the



presidency for a Christian and the retention of a Maronite Commander-in-Chief of the army; the Sunni Muslims were promised the office of the Prime Minister, whilst the Shi'ites obtained the less-influential post of Speaker in the Chamber of Deputies.

The National Pact was essentially a sectarian compromise formulated by the leaders of the various communities. Moreover, as Cobban has said: 'the Pact signified an important sociological change in the content of the principal inter-sect coalition in Lebanon'.<sup>12</sup> The coalition was now primarily one between mercantile city interests and the traditional clan leaders. The concession of the leading offices of State reflected the politico-economic leverage of the various Muslim sects. The Sunnis' acquisition of the premiership reflected the increasing importance of the Sunni-populated coastal towns to the Lebanese economy. The subordinate role of the Shi'ites reflected not only their lack of political leverage, but also their relatively inferior position within the Lebanese economy. The National Pact therefore reinforced the two fundamental features of the future Lebanese political order. Firstly, the Pact preserved the confessional nature of politics, and secondly, it emphasised the influence of business interests.

On 22 December 1943, an agreement was reached between the French and Syro-Lebanese delegations relating to the phased withdrawal of all French personnel from the Levant. From 1 January 1944, until the final withdrawal of the remaining vestiges of French colonial rule during 1946, the Lebanese gradually assumed responsibility for government. Immediately, the first task of the government appointed by Khoury was to establish Lebanon as a distinct and independent entity within the diplomatic arena. The diplomatic position of Lebanon was dictated by domestic political considerations. The international stance of the Lebanon was defined by the compromise contained in the National Pact, whereby Lebanon did not formally commit itself either to the West or to the Arab World. Although the Lebanon recognised its Arab heritage and cultural links with the 'Fertile Crescent', it also reaffirmed its economic ties with the West. It was within this context, with the Lebanon entering the Arab League during 1945 as one of the founding member-states, that Lebanon joined the diplomatic community. This policy of 'neutralism' could only be maintained if there was some degree of diplomatic harmony between the West and the Arab World.

Lebanon emerged into the post-war era as a diplomatic entity without developing as a unified nation-state. Although the international community recognised the territorial boundaries of Lebanon and its political integrity, the Lebanese could not see their patchwork of isolated, sectarian communities as constituting a meaningful nationality. Although cultural movements such as Pierre Gemayel's Phalangists or the predominantly Sunni Najjadeh attempted to promote some vision of a 'Lebanese' nation, the notion of nationalism made little

impact on Lebanon's politics. This is comprehensible. In religio-political terms, the Sunnis regarded the European concept of nationalism with suspicion. For the Sunnis the community, or 'Umma', was a single organic entity subordinate to God. In this sense, territorial and jurisdictional boundaries were alien to many Sunni Muslims, especially as they campaigned to be reunited with their co-religionists in Syria. The divide between Lebanon's communities was further illustrated by the Maronite Christians. The Maronites viewed Lebanese nationalism in terms of Christian isolationism from the interior and Christian supremacy within Lebanon. In simple terms, for the Maronites, nationalism equated with Christian power. These respective philosophies illustrate the lack of a common consensus over the nature of the Lebanese State. Despite the National Pact, the Lebanon was deeply divided not only along sectarian lines, but even over the nature of the Lebanese State.

The existence of the relatively weak Lebanese State was determined by the political and economic vested interests of the ruling élite. This 'establishment' recognised that only a strong centralised state could possibly transform traditional social and economic relationships. Without an assertive and capable state, Lebanon would remain amenable to manipulation through the system of confessionalism. This preoccupation maintained the position of the ruling groups of *zu'amā'* and city entrepreneurs, but it also militated against the formation of any consensual view of Lebanese nationality. As a result, the Lebanese system was primarily an élitist order based upon a semblance of compromise. It was this weak linkage which was, in later years, to collapse and lead to communal conflict. In this respect, the origins of the 'Lebanese tragedy' can be traced to this period and to the myopic concerns of the Lebanese élite.

The dominant economic preoccupation of the ruling groups in Lebanon was the maximisation of their wealth and the transformation of Lebanon into the foremost service economy in the Middle East. As a result of the separation of the Syro-Lebanese currency in February 1949, Lebanon was able to follow an independent monetary strategy. In preparation, during November 1948, the government had permitted the free movement of capital through Lebanon, and between 1949 and 1952 embarked on a programme of lifting exchange restrictions. This monetary policy attracted an inflow of foreign capital. Following the fall of Haifa to the Israelis, during the Palestine War in 1948, Beirut emerged as an increasingly important commercial and financial centre. Moreover, Lebanon was able to resist Syrian demands for a complete customs union which would have undermined Beirut's fiscal autonomy. Consequently, the Lebanon was prepared to emerge into the 1950s as a service-orientated economy separate from her neighbours but dependent upon the outside world.

The government of Lebanon during the Presidency of Bishara al-Khoury was 'little more than an uneasy federation of traditional chiefs commanding a

bureaucracy pitifully inadequate for anything more than custodial functions'.<sup>13</sup> The Presidency of Khoury from 1943-1952 was largely experimental. As the first President of independent Lebanon, Khoury was confronted with the task of forming a government with broad support throughout the country. Without an organised political system based upon mass-parties, Khoury was forced to rely on the traditional political elite in Lebanese society. The keystone of Khoury's political framework was his alliance with the leading Sunni notable Riad Solh. As Prime Minister, Solh was able to put together a coalition of Henri Pharaon, Hamid Karami, Camille Chamoun and Ahmad al-As'ad to form a government.

The Khoury régime and the ministry of Riad Solh was based upon a precarious format of institutional patronage, largesse and electoral malpractice. Although Khoury was obliged to use the traditional influence of *'wasta'*, in doing so he emphasised the corrupt nature of the régime and estranged many of the leading *zu'amā'*. The opposition led by the Druze notable Kamal Jumblatt coalesced into the 'Front Socialiste National'. The opposition accused Khoury of creating a dynastic régime, for in 1947, the elections to the Chamber of Deputies were reportedly rigged and during 1948 a constitutional amendment was introduced in order to secure a second term for Khoury as President. The 'Socialist Front', despite their rhetoric, were primarily concerned that Khoury should not overstep the conventional boundaries of personal power. The turning-point arrived with the assassination of Riad Solh in July 1951, and with it, Khoury lost the support of a leading Muslim notable and his capable Prime Minister. Despite an attempt to ally with Sami Solh, Khoury's position was no longer defensible. In response to a call for a General Strike by the Jumblattist alliance, Bishara al-Khoury resigned on 18 September 1952. The fall of Khoury had demonstrated an important feature of Lebanese politics: the *zu'amā'*-centred system would not tolerate a strong presidency and personal rule.

#### Notes

1. At the discretion of the League of Nations, the mandated territories were eventually to become independent states
2. Longrigg, 1958, 114
3. Ibid.
4. Hitti, 1965, 220
5. Pierre Rondot in Binder, 1966, 129
6. Cobban, 1985, 16
7. Gates, 1985, 14
8. A major impetus to this trade resulted from the agricultural boom in Syria during the late 1930s
9. Gates, 1985, 40

10. Gates, 1985, 183
11. Gates, 1985, 182
12. Cobban, 1985, 73
13. Hudson, 1968, 265

## 2. THE PRESIDENCY OF CAMILLE CHAMOUN: POLITICS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LEBANON 1952-1958

On 23 September 1952, the Chamber of Deputies convened and elected Camille Chamoun as President of Lebanon. President Chamoun had attained power because of the political agitation of the 'Socialist Front' against the regime of Bishara al-Khoury. The basis of Chamoun's political position was his alliance with Kamal Jumblatt, the Druze leader of the Progressive Socialist Party. Following the conventional operation of Lebanese politics, it was Chamoun, as a Maronite Christian, who assumed the office of the President upon the victory of the 'Socialist Front'.<sup>1</sup>

The election of Camille Chamoun to the presidency represented the effective termination of the Chamoun-Jumblatt alliance. Although Jumblatt had proved an able ally in the mobilisation of important segments of the Muslim population against the Khoury régime, for Chamoun this alliance was a matter of political expediency, and the political rationale of the Chamoun-Jumblatt alliance ended upon his election to the presidency. As President, Camille Chamoun believed he could construct a new system of alliances with subordinate and malleable Muslim politicians. In part, this rationale was determined by the powerful position of the presidency within the Constitutional framework of the Lebanese republic.

The President enjoyed a pre-eminent role in the Lebanese constitution. In particular, the power of appointment and dismissal of the Prime Minister provided the President with a superior bargaining position over the Sunni Muslim politicians. Although the Constitution was conceived in terms of a dyarchical régime, there existed an implicit dependency upon a strong presidency. The Muslim politicians were, in general, prepared to recognise the President as the leading component within the political machinery of the Lebanese State, but the notion of an aggrandising and omnipotent presidency was rejected. In institutional terms, the limited presidency recognised the position of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the government. More importantly, in religio-political terms, the mixed presidential-parliamentary system protected the Muslim population from authoritarian Christian rule. This interpretation of the Lebanese political order served as the basis of the political strategy of the leading Muslim politicians. In simple terms, the leaders of Lebanon's Muslim population would resist an aggrandising President and attempt to control politics within the confines of the National Pact.



The nature of politics in Lebanon emphasised the pre-eminent role of the notable within the political system, which was characterised by an absence of ideology-based mass parties. Only the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, also known as the Parti Populaire Syrien, the Ba'th and perhaps the Progressive Socialist Party constituted anything approaching ideology-based political organisations. In general, it was the leading notables of Lebanon's isolated rural communities and the city politicians who dominated the political arena: 'the arrested party life has deprived the Lebanese body politic of a basic mechanism for political integration'.<sup>2</sup> In part, the relative obscurity of ideology as a motive force in Lebanese political culture can be accounted for by reference to the socio-political complexion of Lebanon.

The political behaviour of many Lebanese was determined less by ideology than by traditional patron-client relationships. As shown in Chapter 1, the political allegiance of many Lebanese was 'contracted' to a local notable. The basis of the patron-client relationship was fashioned by a series of primordial social loyalties in traditional Lebanese society. Socio-political linkages were principally conceived in terms of familial, clan, sectarian or geographical constituencies. Upon this socio-political base, the notable was able to construct a political machine, mobilise support and negotiate alliances. Although the socio-economic character of much of Lebanon was to alter during the presidential term of Chamoun, the patron-client relationship survived. In particular, city politicians were remarkably successful in acting as substitute *zu'amā'* for the migrants to the urban districts and incorporating these 'clients' into their political network. In simple terms, the fundamental element within the political system was the notable and his political machine. It was within this political context that Camille Chamoun assumed the presidency.

The Presidency of Camille Chamoun was, from its inception, a precarious and rather experimental venture. Camille Chamoun confronted the *zu'amā'*-orientated system from the standpoint of an outsider. Born into a pro-French family in 1900, Chamoun came to look to the West for a political and economic philosophy, and after his election to the Chamber of Deputies in 1929, he sought to establish himself in the Chouf and reinforce Lebanon's links with the West. Although Chamoun was prepared to operate within the confessional system and recognised the political leverage of the notables, he depended less on traditional political associations and stressed a commitment to Liberalism. Following a liberal philosophy, he authorised a programme of political reform during the premiership of Khalid Chehab.<sup>3</sup> Through 'the government of the decree laws'<sup>4</sup> Chamoun sought to undermine the basis of *zu'amā'* political influence by institutional innovation. The issuance of 90 administrative reform decrees was designed not only to reorganise the bureaucracy but to reduce the amount of corruption inside the State machinery.

Together with the relaxation of the Press Law, a package of electoral reform was introduced which granted a limited franchise for women. These measures were designed to engender greater sophistication and popular participation within Lebanon. Chamoun believed that, through subtle innovational change, Lebanon could develop into a more modern political system comparable with the liberal democracies of western Europe.

The ambition of President Chamoun was, in part, encouraged by the relative weakness of the opposition. The majority of leading Muslim politicians preferred to bargain for office rather than oppose him. This reinforced Chamoun's power for, in Salibi's words: 'with four possible premiers - Sulh, Yafi, Karami and Salam - to choose from, President Chamoun found himself in a position where he could exercise full power, as he could always change cabinets to suit his policy'.<sup>5</sup> The superior bargaining position of President Chamoun was illustrated by the short tenure of most administrations: during 1952-1958 the average length of a ministry was six months. Despite the increased subordination of the Cabinet system to the presidency, most leading Muslim politicians were anxious to attain ministerial rank and gain access to the spoils of political office.

The policies of the Chamoun Presidency encouraged the further development of Lebanon as a service-orientated economy. On 7 September 1953, an agreement was reached between Lebanon and Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan relating to the regulation of transit trade. Chamoun viewed the future of Lebanon in terms of a *laissez-faire*, capitalist and entrepreneurial economy. In this context, foreign policy was an extension of domestic economic policy objectives. Lebanon could not escape the reality that it did not possess reserves of petroleum, it was a comparatively small country - under 4,000 square miles - with an inefficient agrarian sector and an increasing population. President Chamoun believed that the future of Lebanon was connected to the specialisation of his country as a banking centre, an entrepôt and a tourist attraction, and so he looked toward the West for economic assistance and increased diplomatic support.

In a domestic context, President Chamoun's economic strategy was welcomed by the leading economic and political groups within Lebanese society. In effect, Chamoun merely recognised that 'the centre of economic activity in Lebanon was usury, speculation, distribution and circulation; it was not production'.<sup>6</sup> The leading Sunni politicians of the coastal towns supported this general economic philosophy as their constituents' prosperity and their own political careers were tied to increased trade and capital inflow. During the presidency of Chamoun the Lebanese economy became increasingly dependent upon the world economy. With a ratio of 95 per cent of gold to the Lebanese Pound and bank secrecy laws, Lebanon attracted huge amounts of foreign capital. The primary consequence of this capital inflow was an expansion of the financial sector. Financial institutions such as La Banque Fédérale du Liban, the largely Palestinian

Intra Bank or the Italian Banco di Roma's branch in Tripoli were established to provide facilities for foreign capital.<sup>7</sup> In 1954 the number of banks was 21, in 1955 there were 31 banks and the growth of the Lebanese financial sector was to continue throughout the period of Chamoun's presidential tenure.

The development of Lebanon reflected the commitment of successive administrations to the expansion of the infrastructure of the commercial sector. Beirut harbour was, for example, extended to cater for more and larger shipping. In this instance, development proved profitable with an increase in the import-export trade. Indeed profitability emerged as the foremost determinant of government development strategy. The central authorities concentrated on constructing concrete assets rather than developing a welfare policy or seeking to redistribute wealth. These policies not only reflected the prominence of laissez-faire attitudes in Lebanese society, but also illustrated the degree of political power exercised by the economic establishment over Lebanon's development.

The economic policies introduced during the Chamoun presidency indicate the political constituency of Camille Chamoun. Building upon his sectarian support in the Chouf, President Chamoun was eager to attract emerging social groups. As an exponent of Liberalism, Chamoun attracted political support from the increasing numbers of professionals, lawyers, and businessmen. In this respect Chamoun did not depend upon patron-client ties in the same manner as many Lebanese politicians. The major weakness of President Chamoun's political base was his failure to build a formal national party organisation. As a consequence, Chamoun was generally restricted to a narrow political following of Maronites and the middle classes. In effect, Chamoun could only claim to be President of Lebanon whilst he enjoyed the support of leading Muslim politicians, and in this sense, his position was consistent with the format of politics as conceived in the National Pact. The stability of the political system was therefore dependent upon a degree of consensus and common values.

The consensual polity inherited by Chamoun was, however, undermined by the increased prominence of ideology. The coup d'état of 23 July 1952 by the 'Free Officers' in Egypt not only terminated the reign of King Farouk, but pushed ideology to the forefront of Arab politics. The charismatic personality and idealistic rhetoric of Egypt's revolutionary leader Gamal Abdel Nasser appealed to many Lebanese Muslims, especially the Sunnis of Beirut and Tripoli, and to many of Lebanon's disillusioned Muslim population because it combined the vision of economic development together with the ideology of Arab nationalism. Many of Lebanon's urban Sunnis saw in Nasserism a means of reasserting Muslim political power. There was within this Sunni view an implicit rejection of the National Pact and a purely 'Lebanese' solution to the problems



of development. Whereas President Chamoun looked toward the West for increased trade and closer diplomatic links, many Muslims voiced a commitment to Arabism.

Although the question of Lebanon's international position may have served as a rallying-point for either the Sunnis or the Maronites, it was essentially an extrapolation of domestic political concerns, for though the National Pact had stressed Lebanon's neutrality, the foreign policy debate was fundamentally a test of Maronite and Sunni power in Lebanon. Moreover, Nasserism represented for President Chamoun a more immediate problem than the possible subjugation of Lebanon's sovereign independence. The primary effect of Nasserism in Lebanon was the transformation of the 'Sunni street'. Following the death of Riad Solh, no single politician was able to command overwhelming support within the Sunni community. The multiplication of Sunni contenders for the premiership enabled Chamoun to play each potential Sunni premier against the others. As a result, and until the rise of Nasser, the Sunnis were divided and too factionalised to oppose Maronite supremacy. The ascendancy of Nasser apparently effected a subordination of rival Sunni politicians to a clearer sectarian cause.

The changing nature of Middle Eastern politics was demonstrated by the military takeover in Syria. On 25 February 1954, the regime of Colonel Adib Shishakly in Syria was overthrown by a group of officers. The emergence of Nationalist and Ba'thist military cliques reflected the increased prominence of ideology in Middle Eastern politics. The Ba'th Party, like Nasserism, called for social and economic development as well as promoting the ideal of Arab unity. The rise of the Ba'th in Syria further destabilised the diplomatic system that had emerged from colonialism. Lebanon was surrounded by potentially hostile regimes which effectively rejected the post-colonial system of dependency on the West that Lebanon supported and epitomised. Although Salibi asserts that: 'Lebanon under Chamoun became a haven of freedom and security and a last bastion of liberalism in the Arabic-speaking world',<sup>8</sup> many Muslims who rejected dependency on the West and looked to the Arab World were alienated. The estrangement of Muslim opinion can be traced to President Chamoun's refusal to allow Lebanon to join the new diplomatic order established by the revolutionary states. The Lebanon's traditional neutrality appeared to be untenable as the Middle East divided into two opposing diplomatic alignments. Although an emerging Turko-Iraqi axis primarily represented Western strategic interests in the region, several Arab states interpreted such a development as the foundation for a new form of Western hegemony over the Middle East. In response, on 2 March 1955, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia concluded a Pact to defend Arab interests and counterbalance the influence of the United States and Britain. Despite pan-Arab Muslim agitation, President Chamoun refused to allow Lebanon

to join the Arabist coalition. This alienation of Muslim opinion was compounded by Chamoun's apparent support for the British-sponsored Baghdad Pact, which had formalised the Turko-Iraqi relationship in 1955. Although Chamoun was shrewd enough not to join the Baghdad Pact, his evident sympathy for Western designs in the region continued to isolate him from pan-Arab Muslim opinion.

The Egyptian crisis of 1955-1956 further undermined President Chamoun's position as a national leader. In an effort to increase its revenue from the Suez Canal, the Egyptian government of Colonel Nasser nationalised the international waterway on 26 July 1956. The nationalisation of the Canal was deprecated by Chamoun on two main grounds: initially, his sentiment in favour of private property was offended by the unilateral nationalisation of private assets; and secondly, he was apprehensive and suspicious of Nasser's broader geo-political objectives. In response to the Israeli invasion and the subsequent Anglo-French intervention during October 1956, Chamoun maintained Lebanese neutrality. The refusal of Chamoun to break off diplomatic relations with Britain or France estranged pro-Egyptian sentiment and further isolated Chamoun from Muslim, especially Sunni, public opinion.

The deterioration of Lebanese-Egyptian relations not only undermined President Chamoun's public standing but raised fundamental questions about the feasibility of Maronite-Sunni co-operation as conceived in the National Pact. In response to the popular appeal of Nasserism, several leading Sunni Muslim politicians were obliged to adopt a pro-Nasserite position. In Tripoli, the pro-Egyptian sentiments of the local Sunni population were reflected by the political strategy followed by Prime Minister Rashid Karami. As Premier, Karami had periodically embarrassed Chamoun by his support for Nasser and was replaced by Abdallah Yafi during March 1956. The electoral appeal of a pro-Nasserite position was so powerful within the Sunni community that Sunni politicians competed to align themselves ever closer to Nasser. The resignations of Yafi and Saeb Salam during the Suez crisis showed the political desirability for Sunni politicians of appearing to be pro-Nasserite. The notion of a pro-Egyptian stance was not solely a Sunni preoccupation for even the Maronite Hamid Frangieh toyed with pan-Arabism in order to broaden his electoral appeal in the North and counter Karami. However, for Chamoun, the main consequence of the rise of Nasser was an increased distance between his position and that of the Sunnis of Lebanon.

On 5 January 1957, the United States declared the 'Eisenhower Doctrine'. The pan-Arabists viewed the American offer to defend the integrity of the Middle Eastern states in terms of neo-imperialism and Western hegemony. Following negotiations with America's Ambassador, James Richards, the 'Eisenhower Doctrine' was accepted by the Lebanon in March 1957, and this action carried

an implicit commitment to the West and to the United States' strategic interests. Subsequently, as Agwani has said: 'President Chamoun's opponents interpreted this move as a breach of the National Pact; and felt the urge to unite, to organise, and to act against this policy'.<sup>9</sup> A significant proportion of the traditional political establishment were persuaded to view President Chamoun's foreign policy as part of a wider scheme to transform politics in Lebanon. Increasingly, the traditional political elite saw Chamoun as an overpowering and potentially uncontrollable President. These fears were realized during the parliamentary election campaign of June 1957. Chamoun used two violently anti-Egyptian, and largely Christian, political machines, the Parti Populaire Syrien and the Kataeb, to ensure a favourable election result. The defeat of popular opposition leaders Kamal Jumblatt and Abdallah Yafi gave rise to accusations of electoral malpractice against President Chamoun. Altogether, pro-Chamounist supporters comprised two-thirds of the Chamber of Deputies. The opposition, now effectively denied a role in Parliament, feared that Chamoun was about to amend the Constitution in order to permit a second consecutive term as President.

The denial of an effective role for the opposition 'United National Front'<sup>10</sup> forced the anti-Chamounists and self-styled defenders of the Lebanese Constitution to engage in extra-parliamentary tactics. In the Chouf, Druze followers of Kamal Jumblatt demonstrated their opposition to the Chamounist state by sabotaging public utilities. Within this context of destabilising politics in Lebanon, opinions were further polarised by events abroad over which President Chamoun could not exercise control. A group of non-aligned Maronite and moderate Muslim notables attempted to reconcile the régime and the opposition but without success. According to their manifesto of 2 October 1957, the non-aligned politicians stated that: 'We are witnessing a political struggle which in the beginning might have disguised itself in the shape of a conflict over the foreign policy of Lebanon but which is, at the moment, only a pretext for settling old accounts'.<sup>11</sup> On 1 February 1958, the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria was proclaimed. This external development was to deepen the political crisis within Lebanon, and subsequently, foreign and domestic policies became intermeshed and somewhat confused in Lebanon. The formation of the UAR led to demands from Lebanese Sunnis for Lebanon to be merged with Syria and Egypt. The Lebanese Foreign Minister, the Greek Orthodox Charles Malik, retorted that 'Lebanon is and always will be a country with her own flag, sovereignty, independence and mission in life'.<sup>12</sup> This position was consistent with the rationale of the National Pact; but with the increasingly sectarian nature of the political debate, it was interpreted as an anti-Sunni stance. In a vain attempt to traverse the widening sectarian divide Chamoun presented the turmoil in Lebanon during April 1958 in terms of Super-Power relations: 'to talk about standing in the middle of the road and maintaining a principle of neutrality

without tendencies either to the East or to the West remains only words ... Their tug of war has reached our territory'.<sup>13</sup>

The international position of Lebanon was also complicated by a schism within the Arab World. In response to the formation of the UAR, the Kingdoms of Saudi Arabia and Jordan united on 14 February to form the Arab Federation. As a result, not only did Lebanon's international position involve her relationship between the West and the Arabs, but it was complicated by intra-Arab rivalry.

In this deteriorating international climate the opposition to President Chamoun continued to gain momentum. The killing of a leading opposition journalist in May 1958 served as a pretext for an intensification of the conflict in Lebanon. The opposition assumed government complicity and called for a general strike in order to topple the regime of President Chamoun. As the strike continued, it was matched with violent demonstrations in predominantly Sunni-populated Tripoli and on 13 May Druze followers of Kamal Jumblatt attacked the presidential palace. These events transformed the general strike into an insurrection. On 1 July, Chamoun met with the American and British ambassadors to discuss the finer points of the 'Eisenhower Doctrine' and ascertain Western support. According to his press statement of 21 May 1958, President Chamoun presented the conflict in Lebanon as:-

the battle of small people everywhere to preserve their freedom and security. It is the battle for true freedom - social freedom, personal freedom, freedom of thought and spiritual freedom in the Near East.<sup>14</sup>

This rhetoric was primarily designed for western public consumption, and was hardly relevant to the conflict inside Lebanon. The conflict, although heavily disguised in international intrigue and sectarian suspicions, was based upon a struggle between an aggrandising President and a dissenting traditional political establishment.

Although the crisis of 1958 was by no means a religious crusade, the methods of control which President Chamoun used to maintain his position tended to reflect the latent sectarian conflict within Lebanese society. Within a month most of Lebanon, excepting the Metn and East Beirut, was under the control of the opposition. Apart from the State security police, President Chamoun relied upon two nationalistic and predominantly Christian political machines - the Parti Populaire Syrien and the Kataeb - to defend his position. The PPS, banned and suppressed in Syria, was prepared to defend Lebanon's integrity in order to maintain its only remaining refuge in the region.<sup>15</sup> The Kataeb viewed the crisis simply in terms of defending the political - and implicitly the sectarian - régime in Lebanon. Chamoun's dependency upon these two ideological, yet largely Christian, organisations should not obscure the fact that a significant proportion of Lebanon's Christians did oppose him. Christian resistance to Chamoun was led by the Maronite Patriarch Boulos Méouchy and the northern



notable, Hamid Frangieh. But because the leading protagonists relied upon their traditional sectarian power-base for support, the conflict was interpreted as a religious conflict.

Although to some extent Chamoun manipulated sectarian rivalry, he also tried to circumvent domestic issues by widening the conflict. On 4 July the Lebanese government expelled seven UAR diplomats on the pretext that they were meddling in Lebanon's domestic affairs. Moreover, the Lebanese government asserted that '3,000 armed Palestinians, Syrians and Egyptians are fighting at this moment in the ranks of the rebels',<sup>16</sup> and accused the UAR of destabilising Lebanon. In response the United Nations despatched a small and rather ineffective observation mission to Lebanon to examine Lebanese grievances. A subsequent UN report found no basis for Lebanon's accusations, but meanwhile, events abroad were to affect the Lebanese crisis. On 14 July 1958 the Iraqi régime was overthrown by a group of military officers. The conservative and pro-British monarchy of King Faisal which had symbolised western influence in the region was ended and with it the apparent power of the West. Chamoun recognised the broader strategic implications of the Iraqi Revolution and persuaded America to intervene in Lebanon to safeguard Western interests - and stabilise his own position.

The landing of American marines in Beirut on 15 July demonstrated United States concern over the destabilisation of the region. The objective of American intervention was described by their delegate to the United Nations as: 'to stabilise the situation until such time that the UN could take the steps necessary to protect the independence and political integrity of Lebanon'.<sup>17</sup> In this respect the United States had fallen in with Chamoun's design of involving the wider international community in this Lebanese and intra-Arab struggle. Whilst the Soviet Union protested against America's action and asserted that it could not 'remain unconcerned in face of this brazen imperialist aggression',<sup>18</sup> the United States' presidential envoy, Robert Murphy, arrived in Beirut to discuss the situation with Chamoun. Once in Lebanon, the Americans realized that the nature of the Lebanese crisis was largely related to the domestic political position of President Chamoun, and assumed a low-key role. The United States declined the Soviet Union's proposal for an international summit meeting and called for a wider discussion of the Middle East and a UN solution to the potentially dangerous Lebanese crisis.

Inside Lebanon the United States' intervention and the military stalemate enabled a political solution to be negotiated between Chamoun and the United National Front. A compromise settlement was reached whereby although Chamoun promised not to stand for re-election, he was to be allowed to serve the remainder of his term in office. In this fashion, the integrity of the Constitution was preserved by both parties. The choice of Fu'ad Chehab as successor reassured

both government and rebels. Although Chehab had served as army commander during the crisis, he had refused to allow the non-sectarian army to be used in support of President Chamoun and had restricted the military to a peace-keeping role. On 31 July 1958, the Chamber of Deputies convened to elect the successor to the presidency. The election resulted in a victory for Fu'ad Chehab with forty-eight votes, while Raymond Eddé received seven votes and one deputy abstained. The presidential election symbolised the end of the conflict in Lebanon. In a sense, the crisis in Lebanon can be regarded in terms of a struggle between the presidency and a dissenting political establishment. The fundamental cause of the 1958 conflict was the perception of Chamoun as an unconstitutional and uncontrollable autocrat by the *zu'amā'*. Despite the popular and sectarian nature of the 1958 conflict, it was essentially an intra-élite struggle.

#### Notes

1. Traditionally, the presidential office was 'reserved' for the leading Maronite Christian politician of a multi-confessional alignment
2. Hurewitz, 1969, 383
3. Chamoun's interpretation of Liberalism was conditioned by his preference for freer international trade, and his desire to attract American diplomatic support
4. Hudson, 1968, 278
5. Salibi, 1965, 195
6. Gates, 1985, 328
7. These institutions were set up following the end of the Second World War
8. Salibi, 1965, 197
9. Agwani, 1965, 3
10. The 'United National Front' was formed in April 1957; during the parliamentary elections of June 1957, the UNF gained 8 seats in the Chamber of Deputies
11. Agwani, 1965, 37
12. Qubain, 1961, 62
13. *New York Times*, 12 April 1958
14. Agwani, 1965, 75
15. The Parti Populaire Syrien was not in itself a Maronite party. A majority of its members had been recruited from the Greek Orthodox sect. The ideological premise of the PPS was that there was a distinct Syrian nation separate from the Arabs.
16. *The Guardian*, 5 July, 1958
17. Agwani, 1965, 240
18. *The Guardian*, 16 July 1958

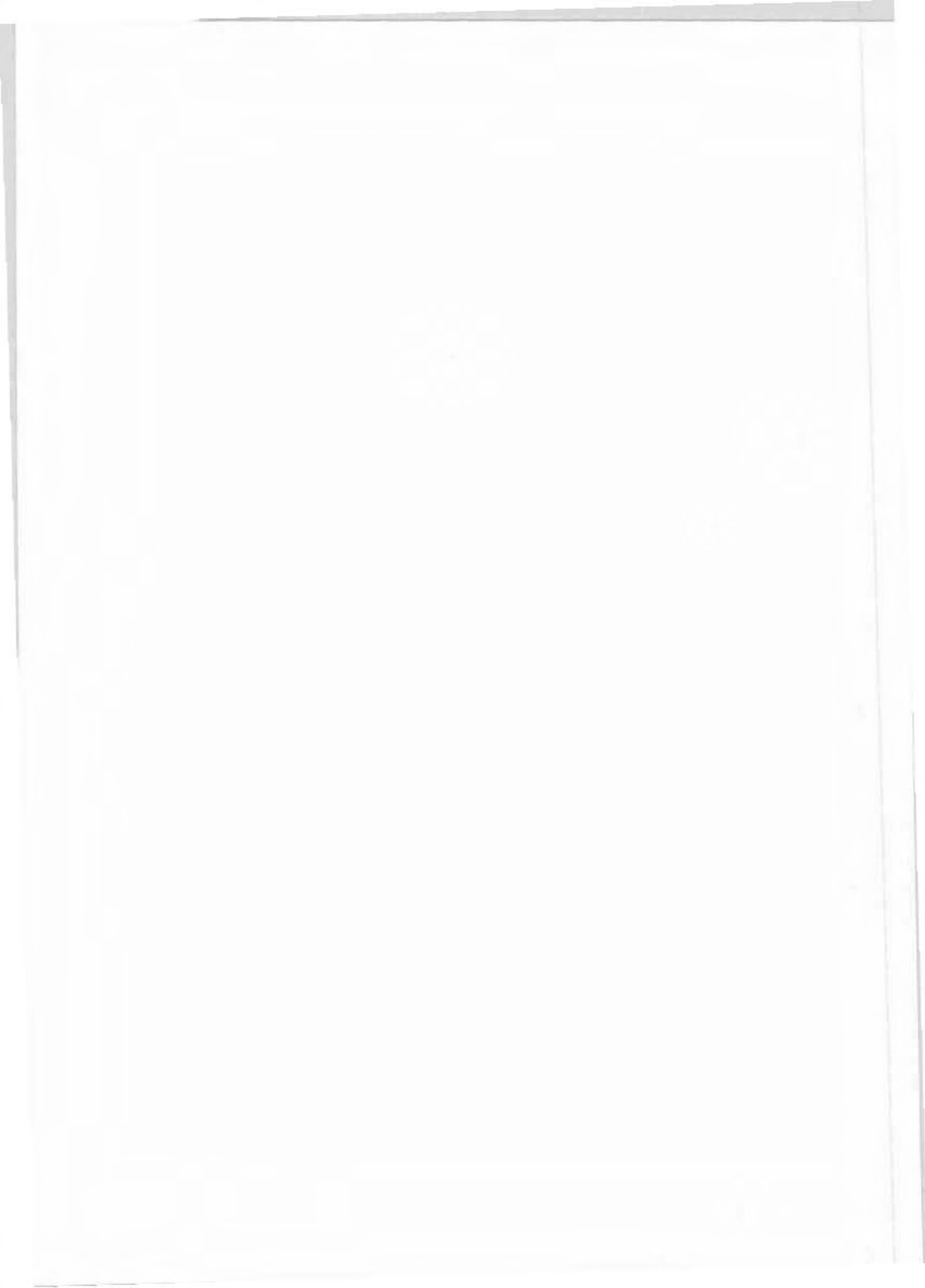
### 3. THE 'NO VICTOR, NO VANQUISHED' EXPERIMENT AND THE RADICALISATION OF THE LEBANESE

Chehabism 1958-1967

On 23 September 1958, Fu'ad Chehab began his term as President of Lebanon. Despite his personal misgivings, Chehab was regarded by the leading *zu'ama'* as an appropriate compromise candidate for the presidency. In this respect, 'the big speechless one'<sup>1</sup> symbolised the settlement of the conflict between the *zu'ama'* and the presidency. The choice of Chehab contained an implicit supposition that the new President would be subordinate to the conventional manner of politics, and the political power of the *zu'ama'*. But in practice, however, the presidential term of Chehab would be characterised by a reinforcement of the presidency, the extension of the State's role in society and by a concerted campaign against the political leverage of the *zu'ama'*.

On 24 September, President Chehab announced the formation of his first administration under the premiership of Rashid Karami. The appointment of Karami reflected the political gains made by the opposition since the civil war. The Karami cabinet included three other leading members of the opposition to Chamoun: Takla as Foreign Minister, Naja as Finance Minister and Safieddin as Minister for Education and Health.<sup>2</sup> The remaining minor Cabinet portfolios were allocated to less prominent members of the United National Front. Although one neutral figure was included, the first Karami government appeared to represent a total political triumph for the anti-Chamoun opposition.

The formation of Karami's administration provoked a sharp reaction from the Kataeb. The Kataeb mobilised East Beirut and the Metn against the Karami ministry in a deliberate attempt to challenge the legitimacy and authority of the government. In a situation of deteriorating communal relations, incidents of sectarian violence threatened to plunge Lebanon once again into civil war. In response, Karami sought to appease rather than suppress the Kataeb-inspired insurrection, and on 14 October, a new government was announced by Rashid Karami. The new cabinet was small - together with one other Sunni minister, Karami was joined by the leader of the Kataeb, Pierre Gemayel and the failed presidential candidate Raymond Edde - and its appointment by President Chehab, established the principle of "no victor, no vanquished". This notion of compromise and political interdependence was interpreted within the context of





the confessional system in an attempt to fashion the future course of politics in Lebanon.

The 'counter-revolution' of October 1958 and the establishment of the principle of 'no victor, no vanquished' marked a turning point in the fortunes of the Kataeb party. The inclusion of the Kataeb leader, Pierre Gemayel, in the government of Rashid Karami legitimised the party's propaganda claims. As leader of the Maronite 'counter-revolution' and defender of Christian interests in Cabinet, Gemayel could broaden his electoral appeal throughout the Christian community. Until Gemayel's promotion, the Kataeb was largely underestimated and often disparaged by many Christians. However, as a member of the government, Gemayel not only gained prestige but exercised a degree of patronage which was to serve as the foundation of an expanding political machine. Together with the motto of 'God, fatherland and family', Gemayel was to develop the Kataeb as the leading political party within the Christian community.

The increased prominence of the ideology-orientated party was also mirrored by the rise of the Progressive Socialist Party. Founded in 1949 and led by the Druze notable Kamal Jumblatt, the PSP called for a redistribution of wealth and the restructuring of political power in Lebanon. In contrast to the Kataeb, the PSP advocated radical changes in Lebanese society. Despite this ideological divergence, both these parties were incorporated into the Chehabist formula of government. The rationale behind this apparently incompatible coalition was simple: in Cobban's words: 'the Kataeb, for many years after their 1958 'counter-revolution', gave Chehab a valuable base inside the Maronite community, while Jumblatt brought to his support many of the modernizing forces within the Druze and other Muslim communities'<sup>3</sup>. The prime preoccupation of Chehabism was development. The traditional political establishment resisted the Chehabist state-orientated formula of development because it involved socio-economic and political change in Lebanon. Obstructed by the *zu'amā'*, Chehab, in effect, turned to the well-disciplined and organised ideological parties in an attempt to reach the population.

The third pillar of the Chehabist state was the intelligence service - the Deuxième Bureau. The Chehabists believed that the traditional political élite was actively engaged in a conspiracy against the government. As a former commander of the army, President Chehab appreciated the value of sophisticated intelligence on politicians and their political machines. The Deuxième Bureau was used to infiltrate potentially threatening groups, establish rival organisations to those established by the *zu'amā'*, and occasionally to suppress opposition. The importance of the security forces was such that El-Rayyes and Nahas were to assert that 'Lebanon experienced a comparatively mild, disguised form of military government for many years. Under President Fouad Chehab the military ruled

the country in an almost direct fashion while under President Charles Helou its influence was felt more obliquely<sup>4</sup>. The importance of the Deuxieme Bureau must not be underestimated: as the third and only controllable component within the Chehabist system, the security service ensured a minimal level of political violence and in doing so provided greater stability for the Chehabist régime.

The initial test of Chehab's political credibility and presidential power concerned the reform of Lebanon's administration. Although the restructuring of the civil service was conceived in terms of a political concession to the Muslims, it was also designed to purge the bureaucracy of pro-Chamounist elements. For the Muslims, the disproportionate distribution of government posts in favour of Christians indicated a need to restructure the bureaucracy. The Chehabist government, moreover, viewed a reform of the civil service in terms of their overall scheme of secularising the State. On 3 June 1959, the government proclaimed a commitment to greater devolution for the provinces. Subsequently, 162 decrees were issued to provide a more decentralised bureaucratic structure, based more clearly upon merit and less upon corruption. Although the government of Karami established a Central Committee for Administrative Reform to supervise the implementation of the programme, this particular Chehabist initiative provoked widespread political opposition.

Opposition to administrative reform was led primarily by those vested interests threatened by secularisation and professionalism. Within the context of the confessional system, the redistribution of government posts to the provinces benefited the largely Muslim population of the Akkar, the Beqaa and the Jebel Amil. Devolution was therefore resisted by Maronites because it diminished their traditional influence within the civil service and because it threatened to create a new Muslim-orientated power structure inside the bureaucracy. The traditional power of patronage exercised by the *zu'amā'* was also endangered by the Chehabist vision of a professional bureaucracy, devoid of corruption and wholly subservient to the central authorities. Together, Maronites and conservative Muslim notables obstructed the central government's attempts to reform the administration. Although a plan for further reform attained Cabinet approval on 16 December 1959, the scheme was blocked in the Chamber of Deputies. The resignation of Husain Oweini in December 1959 showed a pervasive frustration within the government over its inability to effect radical change within the civil service. Although changes were introduced, these were not enough to make a substantial change in the conventional character and outlook of the Lebanese administrative system.

The economic and financial strategy of Chehabism also provoked opposition from vested interests. The economic policies employed during the Presidency of Chehab represent a departure from traditional Lebanese philosophy. The foremost feature of Chehabism was an increased level of government

expenditure. In 1962, the government produced a deficit budget in order to raise public expenditure from L£269 million to L£415 million. Whereas during 1958 government expenditure as a proportion of Lebanon's Gross National Product was 13.7 per cent, by 1964 it rose to 23.2 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Within Cabinet, Kamal Jumblatt advocated the creation of a welfare system and the development of Lebanon's underprivileged provinces. This developmental approach not only involved the adoption of state intervention but implied a movement away from the free-market economy. Following upon the successful precedent of post-war France, the Lebanese State introduced some degree of planning into the economy, albeit on a relatively small scale. Acting upon a proposed Five-Year plan prepared by the French 'Centre Nationale de Recherche et de Formation en vue de Développement Intégral et Harmonisé', the government introduced a L£3 million project during 1963. The implications of the Chehabist mixed economy provoked opposition from the *zu'amā* and business interests inside Parliament. Whereas the economic philosophy of the Lebanese Republic had been based upon the operation of an unregulated and profit-seeking society, the politico-economic establishment interpreted Chehabist attempts to create a 'mixed economy' as a threat to their position.

The Chehabist regime, obstructed in its attempt to introduce a progressive taxation system, aimed to effect some redistribution of wealth through the development of Lebanon's underprivileged rural provinces. Prestigious and capital-intensive projects such as the Litani River scheme for irrigation and land reclamation were indicative of Chehabist efforts to develop the hinterland of Lebanon.

Despite a determined effort to develop provincial Lebanon, the Chehabist system 'was unable to find a final resolution to many basic questions about political and economic power in Lebanon'.<sup>6</sup> The developmental strategy was insufficiently funded and applied too late to affect the transformation already taking place in Lebanese society. By 1963, 37.4 per cent of Lebanon's population lived in towns of more than 20,000 inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> The expansion of the urban districts continued apace despite Chehabist efforts to maintain some balance between town and country. The uncontrollable trend toward rapid urbanisation was demonstrated by the growth of Beirut. Whereas in 1922 Beirut totalled 140,000 inhabitants, in 1963 the capital encompassed 800,000 people and this upward trend continued throughout the period of Chehabist government.<sup>8</sup> The developmental strategy proved inadequate to counter the economic dominance of Beirut and the other coastal cities over the hinterland. In this respect, despite often creditable achievements, the developmental strategy failed.

The adoption of a new approach towards social issues was perhaps the most progressive of the initiatives pursued by the Chehabist government. A Ministry of Planning report in 1959 had described 49 per cent of Lebanese as

either 'poor' or 'destitute'.<sup>9</sup> Following the report, the primary concern of the Chehabist regime was to design some form of welfare system in order to forestall political agitation. The attempt to provide a welfare programme must be regarded in terms of Chehab's desire to integrate the people more closely within the Lebanese State. The rationale of Chehabism was nation-building, and a state-directed welfare system was viewed by Chehabists as a useful tool to fashion the new, modern Lebanese nation. The traditional social and political establishment correctly interpreted Chehabist social policy as a threat to their conventional role and position in society. The basis of the notables' political support, as described in Chapter 1, was founded upon their virtual monopolisation of patronage and his subsidy to the poor. Essentially, the attempt by the Chehabist government to introduce a more interventionist social policy reflected its campaign to restrict the political leverage of the political élite - the *zu'amā'*.

Although a thorough welfare system failed to emerge from the parliamentary arena, elements from the Chehabist programme were approved. In particular, education benefited: as Minister of Education, the assertive Kamal Jumblatt was able to restructure the Lebanese educational system. His tenure of office coincided with an expansion at all levels with increased public expenditure. Whereas in 1957 L£21,220 million was spent on education, during 1964 expenditure reached L£59,451 million.<sup>10</sup> The number of children educated by the state-financed system increased from one-third to 46.9 per cent of Lebanon's school-age population. The expansion of the State-sponsored vocational system represented a significant advancement for the Muslim population of the provinces, particularly the Shi'ites. Whereas in the towns the more prosperous Sunni Muslims and Christians could afford a sophisticated private education, in the provinces the Shi'ites were unable to finance private tuition and relied upon an inferior substitute. Although the State-organised system did not match the sophistication of an education gained in Beirut, it did provide greater access and better resources for the underprivileged children of the rural areas.

The financial policies employed by successive administrations illustrated the Chehabist régime's concern to establish a role for the State in every aspect of Lebanese society. The stability of the Lebanese financial sector was recognised as essential to the economy as a whole. In 1965, trade and finance accounted for 34 per cent of Lebanon's Gross National Product.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, altogether the service sector amounted to 68 per cent of Lebanon's Gross Domestic Product in 1965.<sup>12</sup> The Chehabist régime, anxious to protect the Lebanese economy from uncontrollable speculation, was prepared to intervene in order to manage Lebanon's irregular financial system. Following the termination of the concession to the Banque du Syrie et du Liban, the Lebanese established a Central Bank in 1964. This enabled the State to exert greater control over international monetary



relations, although no attempt was made to extend the State's power over private institutions. The rationale of Chehabist financial policy was indicative of the general Chehabist strategic plan for change. The reforms were designed to reinforce the existing system and bring it under greater State control. In this respect, Chehabism was innovative and far-sighted, but to the established political and economic élite it appeared almost as a revolutionary phenomenon.

The nature of Chehabism was not revolutionary in ideological terms, but transformative within the existing socio-economic and cultural context. The concern of Chehabism was nation-building, not ideological conflict. As Jumblatt later put it: 'there is no Lebanese social unit. Lebanon is a collection of sects and socio-religious communities. Thus it is not a society, nor a community, nor a nation'.<sup>13</sup> Essentially, Chehabism sought to redefine the social and political context of the individual in Lebanon. Whereas the pre-eminent reference groups in society were primarily family or clan, village and sect, Chehabism stressed nationhood and interdependence. Helou asserted that the policy of Chehabism was 'a sound one of cooperation and sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the community and the cooperation of the community in order to satisfy the individual'.<sup>14</sup> The rationale of Chehabist policy was to broaden the social and political perspective of the Lebanese citizen. This strategy of political socialisation was consistent with the campaign against the traditional leverage of the *zu'amā'* and the mercantile establishment. However, by undermining the traditional political fabric of Lebanon, the Chehabists not only antagonised the old ruling élite but transformed the political arena. As a result of Chehabist policies, Lebanon experienced a higher level of political participation and a more prominent role for ideology which were to have important long-term consequences for politics in Lebanon.

The fundamental weakness of the Lebanese approach to nation-building lay in its apparent dependency upon Fu'ad Chehab and not on a sophisticated political platform. In retrospect, the latent instability of Chehabism can be traced to the settlement of the 1958 crisis. In simple terms the conflict had only ended through compromise and the imposition of a neutral political figure. The 1958 settlement had not contained a programme for change or based its political credibility beyond the personality of President Chehab and the need to find a form of consensus in Lebanese politics. Periodically, Chehab spoke of the vulnerability of the régime. Although the Chehabist State had repulsed an attempted coup d'état during December 1961 by the conspiratorial Parti Populaire Syrien, Chehab realized that the stability of the régime depended upon long-term objectives, not personalities. The temporary resignation of President Chehab, following the 1960 parliamentary elections, was characteristic of his attempts to minimise his importance to the wider scheme of nation-building. His return

to the presidency after much public clamour not only showed his popularity but the pervasive uncertainty concerning 'Chehabism without Fu'ad Chehab'.

In general, most Lebanese doubted whether the ethos of Chehabism could remain unscathed without Chehab as President of Lebanon. In May 1964, the Chamber of Deputies had voted seventy-nine to fourteen in favour of amending the Constitution in order that Chehab could serve another six-year term as President. On 3 June 1964, he declined this invitation to stand for re-election and, on 12 July he renounced any interest in the presidency by asserting that 'this is not patriotism, it is egotism'.<sup>15</sup> On 18 August 1964, the Chamber of Deputies convened to elect the successor to Fu'ad Chehab. The election resulted in a victory for Charles Helou with ninety-two votes, whilst Pierre Gemayel received five votes and two deputies abstained. The Beirut newspaper *Al-Jarida* greeted the end of the presidential term of Chehab by asserting that 'Chehab's greatness lies in the fact that he has laid down the principles from which Lebanon can move with confidence towards progress and prosperity'.<sup>16</sup>

The election of Charles Helou to the presidency represented an attempt to maintain the tenets of government established during the Chehab Presidency. Helou possessed Chehabist political credentials; he had served in Rashid Karami's first Cabinet as Minister for Economy and Information. He also typified a new group of sophisticated, modern and technocratic politicians who viewed Chehabism as a vehicle to promote their vision of a new society. On 23 September 1964, Helou took the oath of office, and on 15 November asked Oweini to form a government. The choice of Oweini was most probably designed by President Helou to demonstrate his own leading role over that of Rashid Karami. Nevertheless, following the resignation of Prime-Minister Oweini on 21 July 1965, President Helou was obliged to ask Karami to form a government. The new Karami administration indicated a crisis of confidence in the Chehabist experiment, for the ten-man Cabinet lacked the two most important supporters of Chehabist policy - Kamal Jumblatt and Pierre Gemayel. Although Karami's policies were designed for the 'establishment of confidence upon all citizens through justice, equality and public service',<sup>17</sup> 'Helou's régime provided a convincing argument that not even Chehabist policies were capable of ameliorating Lebanon's inherent problems'.<sup>18</sup> Despite Chehabist effort and enthusiasm, the pace of reform was slower than anticipated. In December 1965, the Minister for Information, Alamuddin, and Minister for Social Affairs, Mallat, resigned over the reform of the judicial system. The leading protagonist of a reform package, Kamal Jumblatt, had warned during the Presidency of Chehab of the need for rapid change, but by 1965 Jumblatt was already prepared to distance himself from Helou. Although the failure to broaden the scope of reform did alienate Jumblatt, it was primarily Helou's foreign policy which estranged both Gemayel and Jumblatt.

In retrospect, Helou could only realistically expect to reconcile Gemayel and Jumblatt if foreign policy was of minor importance in Lebanese politics. Foreign policy was important, however, because the choice of policy tended to imply domestic political supremacy within Lebanon. Although Rondot might assert that 'the Lebanon today offers a magnificent example of equilibrium and of agreement',<sup>19</sup> this sense of balance was precariously based upon a favourable diplomatic environment.

#### The challenge to Chehabism and the radicalisation of the Lebanese 1967-1970.

The intensification of Nasserist rhetoric and propaganda destabilised the uneasy compromise Chehabism had sought to establish between Arabism and Lebanism. On 9 March 1967, Pierre Gemayel issued an open letter accusing Egypt of involvement in domestic Lebanese politics. Gemayel was concerned that Lebanon should not serve as another arena for Egyptian and Saudi Arabian rivalry once Nasser withdrew from the Yemeni civil war. This independent, and to some extent isolationist, approach by Gemayel could only provoke Arabist protestation. Kamal Jumblatt responded by accusing the United States and Saudi Arabia of interference in domestic Lebanese affairs, and the Syrian newspaper *Al-Ba'th* castigated Gemayel as the Trojan horse of western imperialism.<sup>20</sup> It was within this context of polarisation that President Helou received a delegation of Maronite leaders to discuss events. The delegation, comprising Gemayel, Camille Chamoun and Pierre Eddé, urged President Helou to assert Lebanese sovereignty and suppress pan-Arab political movements.

The political base of the Chehabist State was undermined by the polarisation of the political élite in Lebanon. On 8 April 1967, 'The Front of Progressive Parties, Authorities and Nationalist Personalities' was formed and immediately called for pan-Arab solidarity and opposition to Gemayel. In response, Gemayel, Eddé and Chamoun issued 'the Maronite Manifesto' of 10 July 1967 which defended Lebanon's links with the West and reasserted Lebanese sovereignty and independence. This divergence from the political centre in Lebanon, by both Jumblatt and Gemayel, illustrated disillusionment with the Chehabist experiment. Jumblatt, in particular, was anxious to distance himself from the faltering Chehabist formula, and as early as March 1965 had organised a 'National Struggle Front' in Parliament as an alternative political vehicle. In retrospect, the issue of Lebanon's international position served as a convenient pretext upon which both leading personalities could polarise public opinion and maximise their electoral appeal.

The coalescence of leading Maronite politicians and the formation of 'al-Hilf al-Thulāthī' (the tri-partite alliance) during 1967-1968 showed a Maronite concern that the Lebanon should not undergo political change. This 'conservative' approach was largely motivated by the religio-political and

socio-economic interests of the Maronite establishment. The immediate concern of the 'Hilf' was that the political order established through the National Pact should remain intact. This would ensure that despite declining as a proportion of Lebanon's population, the Maronites would always retain a leading role over the Lebanese polity. In another sense, however, the 'Hilf' was preoccupied with moderating political agitation inside the Maronite community. Although the 'Hilf' defended the Maronite political position, it subordinated independent political agitation within the Maronite community to the traditional political élite and reaffirmed the political primacy of the socio-economic establishment.

In contrast to the 'Hilf', Kamal Jumblatt did not seek to use sectarian rivalry as a keystone of his political approach. Although leader of the Jumblatti faction of the Druze community, Kamal Jumblatt could not be expected to appear as a traditional sectarian politician. The Druze community was too small<sup>21</sup> to act as a political base from which Jumblatt could launch an attack upon the ruling establishment. In this respect Jumblatt was forced to adopt political credentials which would circumvent sectarianism and appeal to members of other religious communities. Since the formation of the Progressive Socialist Party in 1949, Jumblatt had defined his political approach as essentially 'socialist'. Apart from a desire to redistribute wealth in Lebanon, Jumblatt saw the National Pact formula as untenable and transitory, and pressed for secularisation and a greater role for the state. Jumblatt was regarded as a political maverick by the establishment because of his potentially revolutionary stance. In this respect Jumblatt was to some extent ostracised by the ruling political élite who were careful not to cement any alliance of expediency with the socialist notable. As a result, Jumblatt tended to rely upon external influences, primarily Egypt and the Soviet Union, to bolster his political fortunes.

The polarisation of Lebanese politics over foreign policy was intensified following the Arab-Israeli conflict of June 1967. The defeat of the allied forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan was received with dismay throughout the Arab world, but in Lebanon it produced greater popular sympathy for the Palestinian cause. Whereas previously the debate over foreign policy was conducted within the political élite, the 1967 conflict transformed the Palestinian cause into a pan-Arab 'cause célèbre'. The defeat of the conventional Arab war machine also engendered a change of strategy from within the umbrella Palestinian movement - the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Although the PLO was established in 1964, prior to the Arab defeat the Palestinians had relied upon the Arab states to act on their behalf. However, following the humiliation of the 'frontline states', the Palestinians determined to assert an independent diplomatic and military position. The accession of Yasser Arafat to the leadership of the PLO in 1968 coincided with an intensification of Palestinian guerrilla attacks against Israel. It was this change of strategy by the Palestinians, together with its initial support



from a wide spectrum of Lebanese opinion, which was to have a dramatic affect upon Lebanon's domestic affairs.

The issue of support for the Palestinian cause had rarely dominated Lebanese politics before 1967. Although a mass inflow of Palestinian refugees had followed the Palestine War during 1948-1949, their presence had not received the attention of the ruling political élite. Importantly, however, the Chehabist experiment had engendered political change in Lebanon, and an increased level of popular political participation in elections during the Chehabist era was indicative of the increasing politicisation of the Lebanese.<sup>22</sup> The period of Chehabist government had undermined the traditional style of Lebanese politics and encouraged the development of a more aware and involved electorate. Moreover, with a changing socio-economic environment, traditional political issues gradually became less important to politics in Lebanon. For Lebanon, the primary consequence of the Arab defeat in 1967 was a radicalisation of important sections of Lebanese society. In particular, radicalisation was most pronounced among the student population, the Shi'ite border areas of the south, and the Sunni inhabitants of Beirut and Tripoli with pan-Arab sympathies. Although Chehabism had induced political change, it had not been successful in constructing a political framework by which consensus could be maintained, so the hold of the traditional political élite was weakened, and to some extent they were no longer able to manipulate politics.

The increased assertiveness of the Palestinians illustrated not only their desperation, but their willingness to interfere in the domestic politics of Lebanon. Many Palestinians had been estranged from the Lebanese system following the collapse of the largely Palestinian-owned Intra Bank in October 1966, and the Arab defeat in 1967 compounded their sense of alienation. In a deliberate attempt to promote change within Lebanon in their favour, the Palestinians sought to radicalise public opinion. In this manner, several Palestinian organisations joined with other revolutionary groups to form a coalition of anti-system parties.

Despite this attempt to influence the nature of the political debate inside Lebanon, the parliamentary elections of March-April 1968 returned the Chehabist Democratic Front as the largest single party. While the Democratic Front, led by Rashid Karami, obtained thirty seats, the 'Hilf' returned twenty-two deputies and Kamal Jumblatt's PSP gained six seats. Perhaps the most important aspect of the general election was the continued strengthening of the triple alliance. The election campaign had united Gemayel's Kataeb party with the National Bloc led by Raymond Eddé and Camille Chamoun's National Liberal Party. In this respect the position taken by the Kataeb against the Chehabist coalition marks Pierre Gemayel's final rejection of the experiment of Chehabism, and the strategy subsequently adopted by Gemayel was not conciliatory, but designed to obstruct

Jumblatt. Although Gemayel participated in the cabinet formed by Yafi on 12 October 1968, it was upon an understanding that Jumblatt would be opposed by the government.

On 28 December 1968, Israel raided Beirut airport in direct retaliation for a Palestinian attack at Athens airport. The Israeli action was intended to signal to the Lebanese authorities that support for Palestinian operations would be punished by Israeli reprisal attacks on Lebanon. The Israeli operation was followed by vociferous pro-Palestinian demonstrations and demands for the Yafi government to resign, and Abdallah Yafi's resignation was followed by the formation of a cabinet led by Rashid Karami. Essentially, the *raison d'être* of the Karami government was to effect some reconciliation between the increasing pro-guerrilla forces inside Lebanon and the vital interests of the Lebanese State. With rising pan-Arabism throughout the Muslim communities, Pierre Gemayel sought to distance Lebanon from the Arab-Israeli conflict and assert Lebanese interests. During March 1969 Gemayel claimed that 'Lebanon has an Arab tongue and it is Arab in neighbourhood and interest, but the Lebanese are not of the Arab race'.<sup>23</sup> In January 1969, the Kataeb had organised a general strike to demonstrate the potential power of an increasingly apprehensive Maronite population, and to make clear to Karami his limited freedom of manoeuvre.

On 3 November 1969, the Cairo Agreement was signed by Lebanon's army commander, General Bustani, and the Chairman of the PLO Yasser Arafat. Although the agreement permitted a Palestinian military presence inside Lebanon, it was intended by the Lebanese government to restrict independent guerrilla operations against Israel. Whereas the Cairo Agreement was conceived in order to mollify pro-Palestinian opinion within Lebanon, it was also designed to reassert Lebanon's sovereignty and effect the subordination of the guerrillas to the Lebanese army. The establishment of a joint PLO-Lebanese army military command to coordinate both forces reflected the paradoxical nature of the Cairo Agreement. Although the Palestinians initially viewed the joint command as a legitimisation of their presence, the Lebanese saw it as a means of control over Palestinian military strategy. The agreement was rejected by the 'Hilf' as an infringement upon the sovereignty of Lebanon and the power of the Lebanese army. In this context the Cairo Agreement appears as an uncertain and precarious attempt to stabilise Lebanon.

The debate concerning the Palestinian military presence in Lebanon had spotlighted the latent divisions within Lebanese society. Whereas the cause of the Palestinians excited pan-Arab sentiment, many Christians were worried about a change from the traditional position of neutrality which Lebanon assumed in international affairs. The Kataeb regarded the Palestinian issue as a Muslim cover for a grander scheme of transformation within Lebanon. In an oblique reference to Kamal Jumblatt, Gemayel asserted on 29 May 1969 that 'certain

political figures in the country are trying to change the Lebanese system and create in its place a socialist state on the model of Syria, Algeria and Iraq'.<sup>24</sup> In general, the Christians did not regard the cause of the Palestinians as the dominant political issue of the moment. In 1968, 72 percent of Christian respondents to a survey<sup>25</sup> agreed with UN resolution 242 that Israel enjoyed the right to exist behind secure borders. Importantly, only 36 per cent of Muslims agreed with the Christian viewpoint. This divergence of opinion between Christian and Muslim was intensified after the Israeli raid on Beirut airport. In 1969, only twelve per cent of Christians 'strongly supported' the position of the Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon, while 56 per cent of Muslims 'strongly supported the Palestinians'.<sup>26</sup> As the presidential term of Charles Helou was approaching its end, the Palestinian issue was becoming increasingly sectarian.

On 23 March 1970, a contingent of Kataeb militiamen attacked a Palestinian funeral. The attack illustrated the Kataeb's determination to force the issue of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon into the forefront of Lebanese politics. Although the Kataeb was prepared to mobilise the Maronite population against the Palestinians and their Lebanese allies, it did not possess the military might to confront the guerrillas. This weakness was demonstrated by the abduction of Pierre Gemayel's son, Bashir. Although Bashir was released on 31 March, his escape from Palestinian retribution was the result of patient negotiation between his father, Yasser Arafat and other leading political figures. This episode proved that the Kataeb as a military force could not hope to challenge the PLO-Jumblattist alignment without the active support of the Lebanese army.

During August 1970, the Chamber of Deputies convened to elect a new president to replace Charles Helou. In a provocative gesture Jumblatt initially lent his support to a Muslim candidate for the presidency, Jamil Lahud. The result of the first ballot proved indecisive.<sup>27</sup> Although the Chehabist candidate Elias Sarkis received forty-five votes, this failed to secure Sarkis a majority in the 99-man chamber. In a second ballot the minor candidates withdrew, and Elias Sarkis and Suleiman Frangieh contested the election. Sarkis had appeared the favourite to triumph, until Kamal Jumblatt, in frustration with Chehabist security policy aligned the PSP with Frangieh. On the second ballot Suleiman Frangieh received fifty votes and was elected to the presidency. The election of Frangieh represented the end of the Chehabist experiment of consensual government in Lebanon. The experiment had survived twelve years but had not produced a lasting political achievement as testament to its early promise. Perhaps the main failing of Chehabism was its reliance upon the extremes to provide a semblance of consensus. Subsequent events were to demonstrate that this failure to consolidate the 'Centre' would prove disastrous.

## Notes

1. *New York Times* 1 August 1958: Chehab describing himself
2. Karami's first Cabinet:
  - R. Karami - P.M./Defence/Interior portfolios
  - P. Takla - Foreign Affairs
  - Y. Sada - Labour/Justice
  - C. Helou - Economy/Information
  - H. Safieddine - Education/Health
  - R. Naja - Finance
  - F. Najjar - Agriculture/Posts and Telegraph
  - F. Trad - Public Works
3. Cobban, 1985, 93
4. El-Rayyes and Nahas, 1972, 56
5. Hudson, 1968, 308
6. Cobban, 1985, 99
7. Hudson, 1968, 59
8. *Ibid.*
9. Hudson, 1968, 65
10. Hudson, 1968, 310
11. Odeh, 1985, 68
12. Odeh, 1985, 84
13. Barakat, 1973
14. *Dawn*, 9 November 1965
15. *New York Times*, 12 July 1964
16. *Dawn*, 4 October 1964
17. *Egyptian Gazette*, 23 July 1965
18. Odeh, 1985, 105
19. translated from *Le Monde*, 4 May 1965
20. *Al-Ba'th*, 13 March 1967
21. The size of the Druze sect in Lebanon was estimated by The Times on 9 March 1984 as 200,000 people
22. Votes cast in General Elections of 1957 and 1964:
 

	<u>1957</u>	<u>1964</u>
votes cast	445,260	595,186
population	1,525,000	1,838,000

(Source, Hudson, 1966, 173-186)
23. Entelis, 1973, 159
24. Gorla, 1985, 107
25. Barakat, 1973, 307



26. *Ibid.*

27. The first ballot in the 1970 presidential election produced the following results:

Sarkis	-	45 votes
Frangieh	-	38 votes
Gemayel	-	10 votes
Lahud	-	5 votes
Hakim	-	1 vote

#### 4. PRELUDE TO CIVIL WAR : THE POLARISATION OF LEBANON 1970-1975

The election of Suleiman Frangieh to the presidency represented an attempt by the traditional political élite to reassert their primacy against the Chehabist régime. President Frangieh was supported by a coalition of Maronite politicians and conservative Muslim leaders who regarded a strong president as essential. President Frangieh was described by Zamir as 'a traditional politician with an essentially feudal and parochial concept of the presidency, who was elected as the result of particular circumstances and not on the strength of a genuine political, social or economic programme of his own'.<sup>1</sup> As leader of the 'Central Bloc', President Frangieh was primarily concerned with the dissolution of the Chehabist régime and the reimposition of the *zu'amā'*-orientated political order. The two principal Muslim allies of Suleiman Frangieh were the Sunni leader Saeb Salam and the Shi'ite notable Kamal al-As'ad.

The first act of President Frangieh was to reward his Muslim allies. Kamal al-As'ad was appointed as Speaker in the Chamber of Deputies and Saeb Salam was invited on 5 October 1970 to form a government. On 7 October, Prime Minister Salam announced the formation of a 'Youth Cabinet'. The Salam administration included Bitar as Minister of Public Health, Ghassan Tu'ni as Education Minister and Ilyas Saba as Minister of National Economy, although Tony Frangieh attracted most attention as Minister for Telecommunications. Whereas most other members of the administration were prepared to follow their duties in a conscientious manner, Tony Frangieh, who was Suleiman's son, only appeared to be concerned with the creation of a private system of largesse.

The administration of Saeb Salam did not reject technocratic government although it was modified in order to reassure the political preeminence of the *zu'amā'*. The most conspicuous change introduced by Salam was a purge of the Deuxième Bureau initiated during December 1970; El-Rayyes and Nahas consider that: '1970 saw the abrupt ending of military involvement in the political field'.<sup>2</sup> The termination of police involvement in politics, albeit welcomed by the *zu'amā'*, was to become an important factor in the subsequent destabilisation of Lebanon. Although the Deuxième Bureau had supported a new generation of radical leaders - such as the Imam Musa Sadr against Kamal al-As'ad - the security police had also maintained a firm hold over radical politics, and the withdrawal of the Deuxième Bureau effectively released radicalism from any control the State had previously been able to exercise.

Despite this parochial and somewhat myopic approach to government, the administration of Saeb Salam also exhibited a willingness to introduce reform. In this respect the inexperience and political immaturity of the 'Youth Cabinet' was most apparent. Although the Salam administration was conceived in order 'to symbolise the country's liberation from the controls of Chehabism',<sup>3</sup> étatist policies were adopted by the new government. The administration introduced a six-year development plan, a programme of reform for the education system, and even tried to exercise some control over the private medical system. This package provoked an outcry from conservative bourgeois politicians inside the Chamber of Deputies, and failed to receive parliamentary approval. Although such a programme for reform may in retrospect appear to have been doomed to failure, it did represent an attempt to alleviate some of the social and economic difficulties confronting Lebanon.

One of the most threatening problems facing Lebanon was a change in the demographic balance between the sectarian communities. The political system established through the National Pact had remained intact even though the demographic basis upon which it was fashioned had altered significantly. The National Pact had been conceived in terms of a distribution of political power according to the 1932 census of the Lebanese population.<sup>4</sup> Whereas a small Christian majority was recognised by a Maronite presidency,<sup>5</sup> a narrow preponderance of the Sunni Muslims over other communities resulted in their monopolisation of the premiership. Although the Shi'ites accounted for 19.6 per cent of the population,<sup>6</sup> they received the least political power shared out to Lebanon's three major sectarian groups. The National Pact system may be defined as an essentially Maronite-Sunni dyarchical political order. Although the Shi'ites were reserved the position of Speaker in the Chamber of Deputies, this did not enable leading Shi'ite politicians to exercise the same degree of influence over policy-formation that the Maronite presidency and the Sunni premiership provided. Even within Cabinet, the Shi'ites were relegated to a poor third place, often holding such minor positions as Minister of Agriculture or Minister of the Telegraph.<sup>7</sup> The change in the sectarian balance in Lebanon and the increase in the total number of Shi'ites would inevitably place strain upon the legitimacy of the National Pact.

The disaffection of Lebanon's Shi'ites was not only attributable to a subordinate role in the political process, but also to their inferior economic position. The Shi'ites in contrast to the Sunnis and Lebanon's Christians, had not exercised any significant influence over the economy of the 'merchant republic'.<sup>8</sup> The Shi'ites were generally confined to the rural provinces of Lebanon and largely concerned with agriculture. In this respect they were often remote and estranged from the urban-orientated political system which had evolved since 1943. The sense of alienation from Beirut was compounded by the preservation of

the *zu'amā'* political scene in the provinces. The Shi'ite communities were dominated and led by a collection of conservative notables - Zein, Osseiran and As'ad. Although the Chehabists had tried to improve the conditions of the Shi'ite-populated areas in rural Lebanon, the Shi'ites remained one of the most underprivileged sections in Lebanese society.

The economic deprivation of the Shi'ites was illustrated by their relatively low level of income. In part, this was determined by comparative immobility on behalf of Shi'ites in the labour market. The majority of them were poorly educated and were obliged to find employment in the industrial sector. Whereas only two per cent of Shi'ite men entered the professions, 35 per cent of male Shi'ites were directly employed in technical and manual work.<sup>9</sup> The concentration of the Shi'ite population in the agrarian and industrial sectors of the economy was reflected in their relatively poor standard of living. In 1971, the average Shi'ite household income was L£4,532; this can be compared to the estimated Maronite family income of L£7,173, a Druze equivalent of L£6,180 and the Sunni total of L£5,571.<sup>10</sup>

The alienation of the Shi'ites from the National Pact political system was compounded by Beirut's inability to defend Lebanon's territorial integrity. As large tracts of southern Lebanon were populated by Shi'ites, it was the Shi'ite community which was most directly involved with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In July 1970, the Hasbaya Report had indicated that the Shi'ites of Hasbaya district were the main victims of Israeli reprisal raids into Lebanon. The report described that in 'an atmosphere of sorrow and fear',<sup>11</sup> 22,853 southern Lebanese departed the region of Hasbaya for the relative safety of Tyre, Sidon and Beirut. The migration of Shi'ites continued as Israel launched reprisal raids into Lebanon in response to guerrilla attacks upon Israel. Between 1968 and 1974, Israel initiated forty-four major attacks into Lebanon, killing an estimated eight hundred Lebanese and Palestinians.<sup>12</sup> The Israeli attacks also undermined the precarious economy of the south, which was primarily concerned with agriculture; but because certain areas were 'colonised' by Palestinian guerrilla units or unsafe to cultivate, many Shi'ites were forced to migrate. This migration, together with a sense of disillusion, on the part of the Shi'ites, laid the foundations for a radicalisation of the Lebanese Shi'ite community.

The Lebanese-Palestinian relationship was further complicated by events abroad during September 1970-July 1971. Like Lebanon, Jordan had served as a haven for Palestinian refugees and as a base for guerrilla training. Following the 1967 war and the loss of the West Bank, a great influx of Palestinians entered the Hashemite Kingdom. The number of Palestinian refugees had effectively relegated Jordanians<sup>13</sup> to a third of the mixed Palestinian-Jordanian population. Moreover, because Palestinians preferred to launch guerrilla operations into



Israel from across the river Jordan, the Hashemite Kingdom was liable to incur Israeli retaliation. In this context, King Hussein viewed the presence of an uncontrollable Palestinian population as a threat to his own position. In September 1970, King Hussein moved against those areas of Jordan which had become a virtual Palestinian mini-state. Although the re-affirmation of Hashemite sovereignty proved to be a bitter and costly affair, King Hussein retained the support of the army and subjugated the Palestinians. This conflict abroad had important ramifications for the Lebanon. Although the proportion of refugees to native inhabitants was lower than in Jordan, and amounted to approximately ten per cent of Lebanon's population, the Palestinians had congregated in areas which increasingly resembled autonomous mini-statelets. In the wake of the Jordanian conflict, the issue of Palestinian autonomous behaviour increasingly dominated Lebanese politics.

The Palestinian presence in Lebanon engendered apprehension and antagonism inside the Maronite community. The Kataeb voiced Maronite concerns by demanding that the rule of law and Lebanese sovereignty should be reasserted over the Palestinian ghettos which enveloped the Lebanese capital. The leaders of the 'Hilf' were concerned about the political implications of the Palestinian presence in Beirut. Although the sovereignty of Lebanon served as a convenient standard-bearer for the Maronite cause, the 'Hilf' was primarily preoccupied with the minimisation of Palestinian involvement in domestic Lebanese affairs.

The radicalisation of politics in Lebanon posed a direct challenge to the traditional formula for government which was dominated by the Maronite political élite. The increased prominence of ideology indicates the radical intellectual atmosphere Lebanon experienced during the late 1960s, and early 1970s. In part, this can be accounted for by the more educated and politically sophisticated younger generation. The educational reforms introduced during the Chehabist period not only expanded the respective school and university systems, but produced more politically aware people. In this respect, the Chehabist attempt to integrate the post-1958 generation into its own model of political development failed. Although the Chehabists had worked for sociological change, they had not constructed a suitable political mechanism to manage the trauma of change. Moreover, because of the relatively easy access to alternative political discourse and political involvement in Lebanon, sociological change was often manifested in political adventurism. As a result, the political scene in Lebanon during the early 1970s became increasingly volatile and prone to destabilisation.

In parallel with other societies which had expanded their education system during this period, the quasi-intellectual radicalism adopted by many Lebanese students represented a fundamental critique of the established political order. In this context ideological rationale often provided a cover of intellectual legitimation for

those members of society who viewed change as desirable. The appeal of Nasserism or Communism was based upon their essentially anti-establishment precepts and political objectives. In this way, Nasserist pan-Arabism attracted the support of disenchanted Sunnis because it challenged Maronite supremacy and upheld the vision of an organic and indivisible Sunni Arab community. Similarly, Communism tended to attract Shi'ite political disaffection because it represented a non-sectarian approach to development. In retrospect, this increased prominence of ideology showed the fundamental flaw in the National Pact. The political system developed since 1943 had not evolved a symbiotic and supportive political culture. The principle of confessionalism, as enshrined within the National Pact, had structured the political régime in terms of religious affiliation. As a consequence, the political order could not appeal to the 'Lebanese Nation' as such because the Lebanon was little more than a geographical expression for a collection of sectarian groups. This failure to produce a national, non-sectarian, political culture was of profound importance.

The philosophy of the Kataeb party was indicative of an absence of political consensus within Lebanon. Although the Kataeb had originated during the French mandate as a cultural organisation extolling Lebanese nationalism, it had since 1958 become increasingly associated with the defence of Maronite political supremacy. Together with the PPS, the Kataeb had defended President Chamoun from what Pierre Gemayel had viewed as a Sunni Muslim conspiracy to incorporate Lebanon into the United Arab Republic. In defending Lebanon's political integrity, the Kataeb implicitly asserted not only the National Pact as the basis for politics in Lebanon but also the pre-eminent position of the Maronite community. In 1971, the membership of the Kataeb party was estimated at 65,000.<sup>14</sup> Although the party attracted a small number of other sectarian groups which were also opposed to Sunni hegemonism, the main political constituency of the Kataeb was the Maronite population of East Beirut and the Metn. Moreover, a notable feature of the Kataeb's political fortunes was its relationship to a challenge to the existing political order. Whereas during the crisis of 1958 Kataeb party membership increased to 62,000, by 1964 it had fallen to 36,000.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, the Kataeb party's fortunes not only provided a calibration of Maronite concern, but reflected the latent instability of the Lebanese political system.

The internal organisation of the Kataeb is characteristic of the party's tendency towards authoritarianism. The Kataeb is primarily a 'hierarchical organisation governed by a modified form of democratic centralism'.<sup>16</sup> The pyramidal format of the party organisation serves to concentrate the power of the leadership over the membership. The Kataeb party has developed from the unsophisticated *Phalanges Libanaises* into a modern, well-disciplined, political machine. The principal aim of the Kataeb's political strategy has been to maximise

its electoral appeal, especially amongst the Maronite population. In 1942, the party leadership had laid the foundations for a well-disciplined mass party. Although a consultative council was established, it served primarily to legitimise the dictates of Pierre Gemayel. The Kataeb constructed around this myth of democratic policy-formulation a centrally-orientated party organisation which reinforced the position of the leadership, and although further concessions were made during 1952, the position of the leadership was already established and inviolable.

The sociological transformation experienced by Lebanon since 1958 did benefit the Kataeb party. In a political context, Chehabism had brought some semblance of respectability and credibility to the Kataeb. The inclusion of Pierre Gemayel in successive Chehabist administrations not only legitimised the Kataeb as the foremost defender of Maronite supremacy, but also gave the party experience of governmental responsibility. Moreover, because Chehabism had undermined the traditional position of the *zu'amā'*, the Kataeb was presented with the opportunity to 'colonise' a new political constituency, and although 'the Phalange did replace many of the old regional and clanic notables, ... it continued to fulfil their traditional functions'.<sup>17</sup> Through an extension of the party's social organisation, the 'Bayt al-Kata'ib', the leadership was able to attract a wider section of Lebanese society into the Kataeb movement. The Kataeb was not promoted simply as an ideological political organisation; importantly, it provided a more sophisticated appeal than most political parties in Lebanon.

The parliamentary elections of April 1972 pointed not only to the failure of the 'Youth Cabinet' to maintain its political momentum but a polarisation of politics in Lebanon. The Salam government had failed to provide political consensus and a determined lead. Although the administration had introduced a significant package of reforms, it had retreated from a conflict with the powerful commercial lobby in the Chamber of Deputies. As the government of Lebanon vacillated and faltered, the extremists gained the initiative. The election returns indicated a shift away from the Centre to both the Kataeb and the Jumblattist coalition.

In addition to the election of six members of the PSP to Parliament, a number of pro-Ba'thists and pro-Nasserists were successful. In part, the election of Dr. Abdel Majid Rifai and Najah Wakim were not only symptomatic of politics within Lebanon, but also indicative of foreign involvement in domestic Lebanese affairs. Lebanon served as a convenient arena for inter-Arab political intrigue, and could be regarded as a microcosm of the balance of power within the Arab world. Although Jumblatt's cause carried an implicit goal of Muslim supremacy, it also represented a political revolution. As a result, the conservative régime in Saudi Arabia supported the Maronite defence of the National Pact against the Jumblattists. Outside involvement in Lebanon was not simply a measure of

the relative power of conservatism or radicalism. The revolutionary régimes of the region were all to some extent involved in supporting client political movements. In this context, the election of Dr. Rifai represented a victory for Iraqi intrigue over Syria. The Lebanese Ba'th party, led by Dr. Rifai, was sponsored by Iraq to counter the pro-Syrian faction of the Ba'th in Lebanon. This involvement of the wider Arab world in the domestic affairs of Lebanon was significant. The intervention of foreign sponsors not only fragmented an already unstable political spectrum, but undermined the fragile political independence of the Lebanese.

The political strategy adopted by Kamal Jumblatt was designed to unite all the disparate revolutionary groups upon one political platform. In this respect Jumblatt was undertaking a dangerous manoeuvre. Since 1969 Jumblatt had been successful in forming a coalition of radical groups, known as the Lebanese National Movement (LNM). However, the credibility of the LNM could only be sustained if the regime proved amenable to Jumblatt's demands. In this respect, the essential logic of Jumblatt's position was to pressurise the government.

The most convenient method of pressurising the government of Saeb Salam was to mobilise the disaffected onto the streets. The foremost means of rousing the Muslim population was by accusing the government of complicity with Israeli operations in Lebanon. The psychological blow of the Israeli raid at Beirut airport in 1969 had undermined the confidence of many Lebanese in their defence establishment. This pervasive sense of despair with the government was compounded by a series of scandals involving the Lebanese armed forces. The most damaging of the humiliations endured by the Lebanese defence system was the frequent and unopposed violation of Lebanon's territorial air space by Israeli warplanes. Although Israeli incursions into southern Lebanon involved civilian casualties, the Israeli operations in the south were remote from the mass of the Lebanese population. Israeli warplanes over Beirut were of more political importance. In this context the Crotale missile débâcle sabotaged the government of Saeb Salam and further polarised public opinion. The Salam administration was accused of buying an incomplete and ineffective missile system from France. Surrounded by accusations of incompetence and corruption the Salam government received its final humiliation with an unopposed Israeli commando raid into Beirut and the assassination there of three leading members of the PLO in April 1973.

The administration of Saeb Salam could not endure any longer and Salam was forced to resign by an indignant Muslim population in Beirut. The resignation of Saeb Salam represents a crucial turning-point for the Frangieh régime, because the President was unable to recruit a leading Sunni political figure to succeed him. The National Pact political compact was undermined by the uncertain position of the leading Sunni politicians. Although they recognised that a leading Sunni as Premier was fundamental to the operation of the National



Pact political system, the major Sunni politicians were anxious to preserve their own sectarian political constituency.

The paralysis of the leading Sunni politicians coincided with increasing conflict within Lebanon. As early as November 1972, a General Strike involving 150,000 people had undermined confidence in the government. Throughout 1973, frustration with the régime continued with a teachers' strike in January and repeated clashes between students and police. Without Salam, however, the régime could not hope to confront Lebanon's social problems within the consensus of the National Pact. Although Amin al-Hafez was appointed as Prime Minister, as a less prominent Sunni politician he was less able to exercise influence over Muslim opinion. The failure of President Frangieh to appoint a more prominent Sunni to the premiership was interpreted by many Muslims as a diminution of the National Pact. Since the conventional operation of government was largely based upon at least a tacit Maronite-Sunni collusion, the régime of President Frangieh appeared to many Muslims as autocratic and oligarchical.

In June 1973 the position of Prime Minister Amin al-Hafez became untenable. On 13 June the Minister for Economy and Trade, Dr. Bahij Tabbarah, and the Minister for Oil and Industry, Zacharia Nsouli, resigned from the government. These were both Sunni politicians, and their resignations indicated their desire not to be associated with the increasingly subordinate position of the Sunnis in the government. On 14 June the Prime Minister, Amin al-Hafez, himself resigned. President Frangieh turned to an old political ally, Takiéddine Solh, to form a government. Although as an established Sunni political figure, Solh could attract more Sunni support, he was aged and less assertive than other candidates. On 8 July, Takiéddine Solh announced the formation of a 22-man government, which was described as 'the Cabinet of all Lebanon'<sup>18</sup> and designed to unite as broad a political coalition as was possible. In this manner, Solh sought to minimise the importance of rhetoric by asserting that 'in the government we are neither Leftist or Rightist'.<sup>19</sup> The Solh government was not based upon any ideological platform but determined by the need for reconciliation.

The method of reconciliation adopted by the Solh administration was indicative of the coalition Cabinet's old-fashioned approach to government. Solh tried to reform the administrative system in an effort to mollify Muslim opinion and stabilise his position. On 24 February 1974, the government introduced a plan to make civil service appointments on the basis of merit. According to Solh: 'we adopted the principle of the non-sectarian aspect of a civil post ... From this day forward, all posts belong to all communities'.<sup>20</sup> In this instance Solh had addressed a persistent grievance of Lebanon's Muslim communities. It did not, however, seek to alter the overall primacy of the Christians, especially the Maronites. After all, the maldistribution of government posts was merely one

symptom of a more general civil and political disability which confronted Lebanese Muslims.

The transformation of many Lebanese Muslims' socio-political environment undermined the political system established by the National Pact. The expansion of Beirut's economy during the Chehabist period had involved a migration of Shi'ites looking for work into the suburbs of the capital. The majority of these migrants originated from the rural provinces where sectarian affiliation was less important than familial or clan ties. However, once incorporated into the almost anonymous lifestyle of Beirut, sectarianism assumed greater significance. The migrant population tended to congregate in sectarian ghettos. Those slum areas colonised by the Shi'ites bordered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. From this close proximity there emerged an increasingly interdependent political connection between the Lebanese Shi'ites and the Palestinians. The interests of both communities would be served by a fundamental transformation of political power in Lebanon. At this stage the Shi'ites regarded an alliance with the Palestinians as an opportunity to exert greater pressure on the political system, while the Palestinians viewed political change in Lebanon as desirable because it would overcome Maronite obstructionism and establish an actively pro-Palestinian government. The fundamental logic contained in both approaches was to end the formula of politics embedded in the National Pact.

The Palestinian decision to become more involved in Lebanese politics may have been made following the Arab defeat in the October war of 1973. Prior to the war the Palestinians had been content to radicalise dissident Muslim opinion, but after 1973 it appeared to the 'Hilf' that the Palestinians were now prepared to assume a leading role in the opposition. In particular, the 'Hilf' was concerned about the Palestinian 'Rejectionist Front', because it recognised that so long as this coalition of guerrilla groups rejected a compromise with Israel, Lebanon would continue to serve as an alternative battleground. In response to the formation of the Palestinian 'Rejection Front' the 'Hilf' refined their plan of action and prepared to confront the Palestinians.

On 18 September 1974, the Lebanese government issued a ban on the possession of private firearms. Although the decree was applicable to all the embryonic militias, the primary aim of the order was to denude the radical groups of their military, and hence political power. The order was impossible to enforce effectively. As the New York Times reported, 'recent estimates are that the civilians of Lebanon have 250,000 guns, or one gun for each 10 persons'.<sup>21</sup> According to Jumblatt, between 1970-1972 the Kataeb were preparing for a future 'show-down' with the Palestinians by training up to 8,000 men.<sup>22</sup> Jumblatt asserted that 'there were too many guns in the hands of the reactionaries: this race to arms was bound to lead to an explosion, and the danger polarised around the

Palestinians'.<sup>23</sup> The possibility of a reconciliation between Gemayel and Jumblatt remained non-existent so long as the debate was centred around an armed Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

The firearms decree hastened the end of what little consensus remained in Lebanon. In response to the order, the two Jumblattists Baluj Takieddine and Tewfik Assaf resigned. Their withdrawal from the government was followed by serious clashes between the PSP and Kataeb in which three people were killed. As Lebanon continued to polarise, Takieddine Solh resigned as Prime Minister. The government of Solh, which had promised reconciliation, had come to an end and the last major obstacle to polarisation had been removed. President Frangieh re-appointed the discredited Saeb Salam to the premiership on 3 October. Salam was unable to form a government, and on 21 October 1974 he resigned.

On 25 October, President Frangieh appointed Rashid Solh as Prime Minister-designate. The choice of Rashid Solh was interpreted by the Sunni political élite as a challenge to the conventional position of the Sunni community, for despite his familial connections, he was a protégé of Kamal Jumblatt. Together with the failure of Salam to form a Cabinet, this was perceived by the Sunni political establishment as a deliberate attempt to govern Lebanon without a prominent Sunni political figure. The leading Sunni politicians regarded the appointment of Rashid Solh as confirmation of a tacit political understanding between Frangieh and Jumblatt. Such an alliance would represent the effective termination of the dyarchical control over government policy which had existed between the leading Maronite and Sunni politicians since 1943. This sectarian interpretation of President Frangieh's attempt to conciliate Jumblatt was of major psychological and political importance.

On 1 November 1974, Rashid Solh announced the formation of a government. The Cabinet was designed to incorporate as wide a spectrum of opinion as possible: included in the eighteen-man administration were the members of seven religious groups. The foremost aim of the Solh administration was to effect some form of conciliation inside Lebanon. This pre-occupation, however, appeared increasingly remote during the winter of 1974 as the major protagonists had already defined their position.

The Kataeb party conference, held during September 1974, had reaffirmed the stance taken by Pierre Gemayel. The party demanded that the Palestinian rejectionists should be prevented from further destabilising Lebanon. Together with an attack upon the position of both the radicals and the conservative Sunni establishment, the Kataeb clearly identified the limits of Maronite tolerance. Although an uneasy stalemate had existed between the Kataeb and the Palestinians, as part of the Melkart Agreement of May 1973, both sides recognised the expedient and transient nature of the accord. Throughout 1974 periodic

clashes between Palestinians and Kataeb militiamen had resulted in loss of life and increased tension. The inter-communal antagonism was particularly intense in those Maronite areas of the capital which bordered upon Palestinian camps. Even as Rashid Solh opened his first cabinet meeting, the Maronite position in Beirut was established and probably irrevocable.

The support proffered by Kamal Jumblatt for the government of Rashid Solh demonstrated Jumblatt's willingness to pursue his objectives through the conventional political process. Although the Solh government did include representatives of the 'Hilf', the two opposing factions did not share a similar amount of confidence in the government. This political division was primarily determined by both parties' long-term strategy. The government of Rashid Solh was envisaged by Jumblatt as perhaps the last opportunity for reconciliation. In contrast, the supporters of the Kataeb viewed their position in the Solh administration as one of damage limitation and obstruction. In this context, the basis of the Solh ministry was inherently unstable.

The threat to the administration of Rashid Solh was not confined to internal factional rivalry. In January 1975, an anti-government coalition was formed. The 'Tri-partite Coalition' was established by Rashid Karami, Saeb Salam and Raymond Eddé in an attempt to reassert the primacy of the 'old guard' over Lebanese politics. Although the Tripartite Coalition was formed ostensibly for the presidential election campaign of 1976, it was also designed to serve a more immediate function. This alignment of established politicians was determined to provide Lebanon with an alternative to Frangieh, Gemayel or Jumblatt. In this respect, the Tri-partite Coalition appeared to represent the last opportunity for the Lebanon to return to the traditional formula of politics. The political position adopted by the Coalition was intended to undermine the political base of Kamal Jumblatt. In this manner, Eddé as the only Christian member of the Coalition - and hence not vulnerable to accusations of sectarianism - attacked the stance taken by President Frangieh and Pierre Gemayel. Although this stratagem was designed to attract Muslim support away from the Lebanese National Movement, it did not succeed and merely estranged the centrists from both Gemayel and Jumblatt.

The stability of the Frangieh régime appeared to be increasingly in jeopardy during the early months of 1975. Although the administration of Rashid Solh enjoyed a wide political base, it was profoundly divided between irreconcilable antagonists. On 7 January 1975, President Suleiman Frangieh of Lebanon met the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad. The two heads of state were not only old friends,<sup>24</sup> but both were concerned that Lebanon should not be destabilised. Although President Assad had voiced Syrian approval for political development inside Lebanon, he was cautious of supporting any political movement with ties to the independent Palestinian guerrilla organisations. The principal topics



discussed by Frangieh and Assad related to the increased level of Israeli raids into Lebanon and the approach which they should take to Kamal Jumblatt's Lebanese National Movement. The January meeting apparently confirmed that Syria was again involved in the affairs of Lebanon. Syrian interests dictated that Damascus should make its position clear to Beirut. The Syrians were primarily concerned by three aspects of the Lebanese crisis. The most immediate pre-occupation of the Syrian regime was to minimise sectarian animosity in the Levant; as an Alawite Muslim, Hafez al-Assad was determined not to sponsor Sunni political ambitions across the border. Secondly, in the context of wider inter-Arab politics, Syria was attracted by the possibility of attempting to dominate the autonomous and uncontrollable Palestinian guerrilla movements. Inevitably, this involved a third dimension: control over the Palestinians, whether it was the Rejectionist Front or the mainstream of the PLO, would enable Syria to obtain a stronger and more diversified bargaining position with Israel.

Inside Lebanon, the government of Rashid Solh continued to rouse opposition from the Sunni community. The absence of a prominent Sunni political figure in the government and Solh's perceived subordination to Kamal Jumblatt were interpreted by many Sunnis as an attempt to undermine their traditional position. Although the political significance of the Solh government can be overemphasised, its psychological importance should not be ignored. Some of the more underprivileged sections of the Sunni community welcomed state intervention and secularism, but many Sunnis, especially the bourgeoisie of Beirut and Tripoli, were anxious to defend their sectarian political position.

On 26 February 1975, a protest march was held by the fishermen of Sidon against the licensing of the Protein Company. The fishermen of Sidon viewed competition from a modern mechanised firm with apprehension. In this context, the issue centred about a simple conflict of interest. However, the Sidon affair did assume another dimension. In general, the fishermen of Sidon were Sunni Muslims, but the Protein Company was part-owned and headed by the former President of Lebanon, Camille Chamoun. As a consequence, the cause of the fishermen came to symbolise the resistance of the Sunni community to the modern era. During the fishermen's demonstration, a prominent supporter of their cause and the local deputy, Maarouf Saad was shot. The Sunni community immediately accused the police and organised a series of strikes throughout Lebanon. On 29 February, the crisis assumed a violent nature, with a clash between civilians and police, in which sixteen people died. The violence continued following the death of Maarouf Saad on 6 March. Tension remained high within the Sunni community throughout March and April. There were fears that another provocative incident could lead to a more serious outbreak of violence, and perhaps civil war.

The agitation of the Sunni community during March-April 1975 did represent a significant stage in the dramatic scenario which led to civil war in Lebanon. Although many of the traditional Sunni leaders may have welcomed a crisis for the government of Rashid Solh, they perhaps miscalculated the nature and direction of public disaffection. Although leaders such as Saeb Salam were greeted with respect, the traditional Sunni political elite did not exert a monopolistic control over the Sunni community. In Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon, key sections of the Sunni population were organised and led by a series of autonomous radical Nasserist movements. Together with Palestinians and members of the LNM, these Nasserist groups seized the initiative within the Muslim communities from the traditional Muslim establishment during March-April. During this period sectarian animosity increased. A series of demonstrations in both West and East Beirut mobilised the political consciousness and latent sectarianism of the respective communities. Lebanon was a political powder-keg waiting for an inevitable ignition.

#### Notes

1. Zamir, 1980, 67
2. El-Rayyes and Nahas, 1972, 53. It is important to note that in this respect Rayyes and Nahas make no distinction between the police and the military.
3. Cobban, 1985, 111
4. The 1932 census of the population was the first and only estimation by the state of sectarian numbers
5. The Maronites were the largest single community in the 1932 census, with 28.8 per cent of the population. See Cobban, 1985, 16
6. *Ibid.*
7. Between 1943-1961, there were 9 Shi'ite ministers for the Telegraph portfolio. See Crow, 1962
8. Cobban, 1985, 74
9. Chamie, 1980, 183
10. Chamie, 1980, 182
11. *New York Times*, 5 July 1970
12. Hudson, 1978, 267
13. In this instance 'Jordanians' refers to the pre-1948 population of the Hashemite Kingdom. [Recent scholarship has challenged this view, and suggested the proportion of Palestinians is under 50%. Ed.]
14. Hudson, 1968, 265
15. *Ibid.*
16. Entelis, 1972-1973, 22
17. Khalaf, in Owen, 1976, 47

18. *Financial Times*, 10 July 1973
19. *Ibid.*
20. *New York Times*, 24 February 1974
21. *New York Times*, 19 September 1974
22. Joumblatt, 1982, 53
23. *Ibid.*
24. Assad had played host and provided a refuge to Suleiman Frangieh during his temporary exile from Lebanon between 1957-1958. There were also economic ties between the Frangieh family and Rifaat al-Assad, the Syrian President's brother

## 5. THE LEBANESE CONFLICT, 1975-1976

On 13 April 1975, an attempt was made on the life of Kataeb Party leader, Pierre Gemayel. Although Gemayel survived, some of his bodyguards were killed. The motivation for the attack remains unclear. The assassination attempt may have been conceived to remove the foremost personality against change, or it may have been designed to intimidate Gemayel. Whatever was the cause, the assault provoked a predictable and violent response from Kataeb militiamen - and this was probably the fundamental reason for the attack.

On the afternoon of 13 April, a bus transporting a number of Palestinians to the refugee camp at Tel al-Zantar was ambushed. The bus was attacked in the predominantly Maronite district of Ain al-Rummaneh where the Kataeb Party had a strong following; the assault resulted in the deaths of twenty-seven Palestinians, and the killings at Ain al-Rummaneh mark the start of the civil war in Lebanon. The militias which had spent the previous five years building up their arsenals took to the streets.

The outbreak of urban warfare in Beirut demonstrated the conspicuous inadequacy of the State to assert its sovereignty over Lebanese territory. The failure of the Lebanese government to maintain order was attributable to three factors. Since 1970, the intelligence network established by the Deuxième Bureau had been dismantled by the Frangieh regime. As a result, police surveillance of potentially subversive political groups had greatly diminished. This may, in part, account for some of the apparent miscalculations made by members of the régime during the spring of 1975. Moreover, once the armed militias were actively engaged on the streets the Lebanese authorities did not possess sufficient coercive power to quell the fighting: 'the Lebanese army was basically an extension of the gendarmerie and the urban police'.<sup>1</sup> Although the army was well-trained and relatively well-equipped, it was prone to sectarian division. The government believed that the Maronites who staffed the officer ranks would continue to follow orders, but were less sure about the junior ranks, which were predominantly Muslim. The government's reluctance to use the army also indicates a third major reason for the continuation of the urban conflict. Not only was the 'nerve' of the Lebanese government being tested, but the clashes in Beirut also tested the will of the political elite for compromise.

To understand the circumstances and political context of the clashes in Beirut, some reference should be made to the condition of Beirut in 1975. Beirut was more than a capital; it was a massive 'melting-pot' of the sectarian groups in Lebanese society thrown together by tradition, destitution and migration. In this



respect, Beirut served as a volatile microcosm of Lebanese society in general. The economic prosperity experienced by Beirut during the Chehabist period had attracted all sections of Lebanese society, especially Maronite Christians and Shi'ite Muslims from the rural provinces. This sociological transformation of Beirut also involved sectarian change. New settlements were made in the suburbs in response to the increased property values of Beirut's central districts. These new settlements were hurriedly established, possessed few public utilities and were soon overcrowded. This colonisation of South and East Beirut upset the traditional sectarian balance of Sunni Muslims, and Maronite, Greek Catholic, and Armenian Christians which had existed prior to urbanisation. The most vociferous protestations against the changing sectarian complexion of Beirut emanated from the Maronite communities of the south-eastern districts of the capital. Former Maronite areas such as Shiyyah had been colonised either by migrant Shi'ites or Palestinian refugees. For many working-class Maronites, the Shi'ites and the Palestinians represented both a cultural and an economic challenge to their traditional position in Beirut.

The first to take up the political offensive was the Druze leader of the Lebanese National Movement, Kamal Jumblatt. He openly accused the Kataeb of perpetrating the Ain al-Rummaneh killings and of inciting public disorder. In this manner Jumblatt tried to discredit the Kataeb and force the removal of Kataeb Party members from the government. The Kataeb responded by heightening the political crisis. On 7 May, the two Kataeb members of the government resigned. The withdrawal of the Kataeb from the administration divided the government along sectarian lines, since other Christian members of the administration could not react in a passive fashion to the removal of the leading Maronite political party from the government. Moreover, some conservative Muslim leaders realized that without the Christian bloc their own political position was untenable. The Kataeb resignations were swiftly followed by the withdrawal of Camille Chamoun's National Liberal Party and the Druze notable Majid Arslan from the government.

The resignation of eleven members of the coalition Cabinet created a political impasse for President Frangieh. The President's attempt to incorporate the warring factions in a coalition government had proved unsuccessful. His intention had been to try and restrict the conflict to the confines of the Cabinet. The polarisation of politics along sectarian lines, and to some extent on an ideological basis, had rendered coalition government impossible. On 15 May, Rashid Solh resigned. Baulked by the factional and polarised political system, President Frangieh turned to an authoritarian solution to remedy the problems of government, and appointed a military Cabinet on 23 May.

The formation of a Cabinet composed of military officers did not provide reassurance for President Frangieh. Although the Sunni brigadier, Nureddine

Rifai, was appointed Prime Minister, the administration was castigated by all sections of the Muslim political establishment. The reasoning behind Frangieh's turn towards the military was primarily to provide order, not compromise, but the military was viewed with suspicion by many Muslims. The recollection of the army's actions during the riots in Sidon remained. Moreover, the Muslim politicians were concerned that the army should not be brought into the conflict, for they feared that the Maronite officer cadres might bring the army into the struggle against the Jumblattist coalition. As a result the military Cabinet of Nureddine Rifai found no significant support from the Muslim communities, and on 26 May, Prime Minister Rifai resigned.

The failure of the military Cabinet forced President Frangieh again to seek a compromise solution. On 28 May, Rashid Karami was appointed Prime Minister by President Frangieh. This represented an attempt by Frangieh to by-pass the Kataeb-Jumblatt dispute and to appeal to more moderate elements within the political elite.

Karami stated that 'the President of the Republic has designated me to form a government whose paramount mission will be to re-establish law, order and tranquillity and thereby restore self-confidence in the population so we can begin a sane dialogue'.<sup>2</sup>

Following the same rationale as the appointment of Karami, both the Kataeb and Kamal Jumblatt were to be excluded from the new government. As Karami continued the process of negotiation for the new administration, the armed conflict in Beirut got worse. After two weeks of heavy fighting, 128 people were dead and approximately 300 wounded.<sup>3</sup>

On 30 June, Prime Minister Karami announced the formation of a six-man Cabinet. The Karami government was composed of traditional political figures, and there was also a distinct absence of ideological content in the new administration which was designed to represent all the major sectarian groups in Lebanese society, and to reaffirm the Lebanese practice of consensual government. Apart from the Sunni Karami as Premier, the administration included the Shi'ite notable Adil Osseiran, the Druze notable Majid Arslan, the Greek Catholic Philip Takla and the Greek Orthodox Tu'ni with Camille Chamoun representing the Maronite community. Although the Cabinet was designed to maximise consensus, two leading personalities dominated the government. In a reflection of the traditional dyarchical mode of government implied by the National Pact, the Sunni Muslim Rashid Karami and the Maronite Christian Camille Chamoun emerged at the forefront of the political debate. Although Chamoun's political stature was recognised by his portfolio as Minister of the Interior, Karami counterbalanced the ex-President by serving as Minister of Defence. In this respect, although Karami had reassured Maronite concern

for law and order, it was the Prime Minister who ultimately controlled security policy.

The conflict which had largely been confined to the Lebanese capital was extended to the provinces during the summer. In Beirut, during July, a cease-fire was reached between the Lebanese authorities and the mainstream of the PLO. As a result, the battle for control of Beirut was waged between the Maronite militias and the Jumblattist coalition of Lebanese radicals and dissident Palestinians. As a war of attrition emerged in Beirut, other fronts were opened-up by the rival groups. The bout of urban warfare which had plagued Beirut spread to Zahleh in the Beqaa valley and to Zghorta in the North.

It is important to recognise that the extension of the Lebanese conflict to the provinces was not simply an extrapolation of the Beirut clashes. In the instance of Zahleh, the largely Greek Catholic town was attacked by neighbouring Palestinians and Shi'ites from its rural environs. Although this conflict involved a sectarian facade, it also involved another feature of Lebanese politics - the struggle between town and country. In the North, again, the conflict between the Maronite inhabitants of Zghorta and the Nasserist militias of Tripoli was more complex than a simple struggle between sectarian groups. The sectarian animosity between the populations of Zghorta and Tripoli embraced an old rivalry between the two towns which was manifest during the crisis of 1958. Although the combatants fought behind the rhetoric of Lebanism or Nasserism, much of their behaviour was conditioned by ancient clan or familial affiliation. Although sectarian conflict was easiest to recognise in the conflict which exploded in Lebanon during the summer of 1975, other sociological factors did play an important role.

On 1 August 1975, Prime Minister Karami visited Damascus to discuss the crisis with the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad. Although the situation in Lebanon was motivation enough for the visit, the fighting in the North between the Zghortawi supporters of President Frangieh and the Sunni constituents of Premier Karami's Tripoli was perhaps the dominant topic.<sup>4</sup> The conflict threatened to undermine any possible alliance between Karami and Frangieh. Neither Prime Minister nor President could possibly appear not to support their respective political constituencies. In this respect, the major participants in the drama had, to some extent, lost the political initiative to the militias. President Assad did not at this stage intervene in a direct fashion to remedy the situation. The Lebanese President and Prime Minister were able to resolve the situation by stationing regular Lebanese troops between Zghorta and Tripoli. Although the solution had involved the enforced replacement of a hard-line Maronite army commander, by a more moderate officer, the use of the military was a convenient method of resolving the political impasse. Since a non-sectarian means of

quelling violence had been employed, both Frangieh and Karami could each assert that they had not surrendered their political position.

Despite the efforts of Frangieh and Karami to maintain the perceived neutrality of the army's intervention in the North, Jumblatt remained suspicious. Following the killing of thirteen Nasserist guerrillas by the army, on 13 September, Jumblatt called for a general strike. The motivation for this action was twofold. Initially, the strike would serve as a protest against the perceived bias of the army. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it would demonstrate public support for the loose coalition of Arabist and radical groups in the Lebanese National Movement.

The LNM contained a broad spectrum of radical and revolutionary political organisations. Formed and led by Kamal Jumblatt, it was an alliance of anti-system political groups dedicated to the transformation of Lebanon. Although the leadership of Jumblatt was recognised, 'diverse ideological commitments and rivalries made it extremely difficult for all LNM member groups to agree on the same policies'.<sup>5</sup> The LNM included three distinct political trends. The largest single bloc comprised the independent Lebanese parties. This grouping was composed of Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party; the Organisation of Communist Action; the Arab Socialist Action Party; *al-Murabitun* and two small Nasserist groups. The two other trends within the LNM were not independent, but deferred to Syria or Iraq. The pro-Syrian grouping was composed of the *Ba'ith* Party Organisation, Musa Sadr's Shi'ite 'Movement of the Deprived' and the Union of Working People's Forces.<sup>6</sup> The third trend, which took a pro-Iraqi stance, was represented by the Arab *Ba'ith* Socialist Party. The nature of the LNM contained both its strength and its weaknesses. As a broad-based coalition of radical groups, the LNM could maximise its appeal throughout the disaffected and Arabist Muslim communities of Lebanon. However, the dependence of important elements within the coalition upon foreign support not only undermined the cohesion of the movement, but subjected it to inter-Arab rivalry.

The political platform upon which Kamal Jumblatt had constructed the LNM was contained in the 'five points' of June 1975. This Jumblattist programme for change aimed to redistribute political power in Lebanon. Jumblatt's primary objective was to terminate the confessional system of government, so he had called for the redefinition of the constitutional position of the executive. Together with a change in the electoral law, Jumblatt called for the removal of restrictions on naturalisation rights. These points were designed to increase Muslim power over the political system. Jumblatt hoped to exclude the number of mostly Christian expatriate Lebanese from the method of calculating the population whilst giving Palestinian refugees some legal basis for residence in the Lebanon. The reorganisation of the army upon a non-sectarian basis was an important feature in Jumblatt's programme. If completed, the reform of the military



could have removed one of the major pillars of Christian primacy in Lebanon. Although these demands represented the basis upon which Jumblatt was prepared to negotiate, the programme constituted a revolutionary scheme for the fundamental transformation of power in Lebanon. In this context, there appeared to be little common consensus between Jumblatt, the Kataeb or the Frangieh régime.

On 17 September, despite Jumblatt's withdrawal of his strike call, the Kataeb initiated an artillery assault upon the market area of central Beirut. The Kataeb's attack represented an escalation of the conflict. According to one scholar, the Kataeb's action 'indicated a determination by the Party ... to demonstrate the readiness of the Christian Lebanese to destroy the country themselves, or force its partition, rather than to yield on any issue'.<sup>7</sup> By escalating the level of violence in Beirut, the Kataeb may have intended to provoke the army to intervene. Although the clashes with the Palestinians, during the spring, had been designed to involve the regular Lebanese army in support of the Kataeb, the authorities had been able to maintain their hold over the Maronite officer cadres. The Kataeb offensive failed; it achieved no significant military advantage and did not provoke the military to intervene. In the face of the military stalemate in Beirut, the political approach was again adopted.

On 19 September, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Abdul Halim Khaddam, arrived in Beirut to discuss the situation with the leading protagonists. At this juncture, the position of Syria was uncertain, although Damascus apparently accepted some responsibility for attempting to end the conflict. On 22 September, Khaddam optimistically asserted that 'we will not leave Lebanon until the crisis is solved, even if we have to stay a month'.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the region, Syrian mediation was viewed with suspicion. Within the Arab world, Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were concerned that Syria should not achieve a diplomatic success singlehanded. These states worked for a solution based on Arab consensus as an alternative to Syrian hegemony. In the broader context of Arab-Israeli rivalry, the Syrian role was viewed with more immediate concern by the Israelis. On 21 September, Foreign Minister Yigal Allon had voiced Israel's apprehension over Lebanon. Allon stated that 'I should not like Syria, for instance to interpret the new situation in which no Great Power intervenes as giving her a license to intervene herself'.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, Israel warned Syria of the danger of military intervention in the Lebanese conflict.

The diplomatic intervention of Syria appeared to produce some results with the formation of the National Dialogue Committee on 24 September. The Committee was composed of 20 members representing all the major participants in the crisis. The *raison d'être* of the NDC was to discuss the basis for political reconciliation. Although the NDC convened nine times between September and November, it repeatedly floundered upon Jumblatt's programme for change. The Jumblattist demands were resisted by the Kataeb and the National Liberal

Party. Chamoun, confident of the relative weakness of support for Jumblatt in the Chamber of Deputies, asserted that 'it is the job of Parliament, one of the main constitutional organs, to decide on the reforms to be made'.<sup>10</sup> The Maronite parties openly opposed all of Jumblatt's basic demands. Gemayel justified the intransigence of the Maronite bloc by asserting that, 'the present Lebanese framework is one that safeguards our national unity and it is the successful framework'.<sup>11</sup> According to Gemayel, the most immediate concern for the NDC was not the question of political reform, but the restoration of law and order. Baulked by this Maronite obstructionism, the NDC rapidly lost its political momentum.

The Maronite bloc attempted to circumvent the domestic pressures inside Lebanon by an appeal to the wider Arab community. In response a conference of foreign ministers from a number of Arab states including Egypt and Saudi Arabia convened at Cairo during October. The conference failed primarily because two of the leading participants in the crisis, Syria and the PLO did not attend. As a result, no diplomatic consensus between the Arab states relating to Lebanon could be formulated. The failure of the conservatives' attempt at diplomacy encouraged the radicals to renew their offensive in West Beirut. The military alignment of *al-Murabitun* and the Palestinian and Communist forces viewed the Cairo Summit as a sign of desperation within the Maronite coalition. Their offensive through the Qantari district and towards the tourists' hotel quarter was designed to test the military and political resolve of the Maronites.

The Maronite position remained intact, and by December 1975 the Kataeb was able to maintain a defensive cordon in Beirut. The mediation of the Vatican and an envoy from France proved fruitless. On 6 December, Gemayel visited Damascus to discuss the conflict with the Syrian government. Throughout December, a series of sectarian atrocities maintained a justification for the continuation of the conflict. Although the crisis had started as an ideological struggle the Lebanese conflict had by December 1975 assumed a sectarian nature. This development was illustrated by the Kataeb militia's attempts to expel the Muslim population of East Beirut.

On 15 December, the Kataeb removed the Shi'ite inhabitants of the northern district of Haret al-Ghawarina. This forced evacuation of indigenous Muslims was the precursor to a determined campaign against the Muslim population of East Beirut. The targets for the Maronite militias were the Palestinian refugee camps at Tel al-Zaatar and Jisr al-Basha. Although Arafat had wanted the main body of the PLO not to intervene in the conflict, the leader of the most powerful Palestinian guerrilla organisation could not afford to remain passive. In response to the Maronite assaults, the Fatah organisation, led by Yasser Arafat assumed a more prominent military position. While Fatah defended the refugee camps, the Rejection Front joined with the LNM to besiege Maronite enclaves outside Kataeb

control. The siege warfare continued throughout January 1976; the Maronite militias took Maslakh and Qarantina while the Jumblattists captured the Maronite coastal town of Damour.

The battle for the enclaves marked a significant stage in the Lebanese conflict. The polarisation of Lebanon was instanced by two developments. On 31 January, the leaders of the hard-pressed Maronite militias met to coordinate their strategy. The formation of the 'Lebanese Front' marked an important solidification of the desperate Maronite organisations. This strategic alliance subordinated the smaller militia groups such as the 'Guardians of the Cedar' the 'Saint Marun Youth' and the 'Knights of the Virgin' to the political and military strategy formulated by the Kataeb and the National Liberal Party. The emergence of the Kataeb as the leading element within the Lebanese Front was a significant precursor of the Party's subsequent drive to monopolise the Maronite political constituency. Also during January 1976, the continued polarisation of Lebanon was illustrated by developments within the Muslim officer ranks of the army. The 'Arab Army of Lebanon' was established by a Sunni officer, Ahmed al-Khatib, in reaction to the perceived bias within the army in favour of the Maronites. Although Muslim defections from the army were not without military significance, the primary importance of the schism was symbolic. Throughout the previous year, the army was almost the only pillar of the Lebanese state which had not disintegrated, and had represented some form of inter-sectarian co-operation inside Lebanon. The splits within the military showed the intractability of the Lebanese conflict. Both these developments in January 1976 - the solidification of the Maronite militias and the disintegration of the army - were indicative of the sectarian nature of the civil war.

The rejection of peace proposals by the Maronites in January hastened a intensification of Syria's diplomatic efforts. The importance of the Syrian government was evident as it attempted to find a starting-point for negotiations; Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam warned that 'Lebanon used to be part of Syria and we shall take it back at the first serious attempts at partition'.<sup>12</sup> In this context, Damascus had warned the Maronites against a cantonisation of Lebanon and had simultaneously impressed upon Jumblatt the need for a compromise settlement to the conflict in Lebanon. The Syrian initiative, however, produced little support from outside the Levant. The Israeli Defence Minister, Shimon Peres, warned that 'any Syrian intervention in Lebanon, without regard to the reason, cannot leave Israel indifferent. We would have to consider what steps to take'.<sup>13</sup> The United States recognised the potential danger of foreign intervention in domestic Lebanese affairs and on 9 January had urged that 'no country should intervene in Lebanon. We are opposed to any outside intervention by any country, including Syria and Israel'.<sup>14</sup>

The Syrian initiative appeared to have met with success when on 22 January a cease-fire agreement was announced. The armistice was to be supervised jointly by the Lebanese and Syrian governments, together with the PLO. The Syrian-sponsored truce was significant because it implied direct Syrian military, as well as diplomatic, involvement in the conflict, and the importance of the Syrians to the reconciliation process was further illustrated, during February, when Frangieh and Karami revisited Damascus. On 14 February, following his visit to Syria, President Frangieh proclaimed the 'Constitutional Document'. The Constitutional Document represented an attempt by the Frangieh régime and the traditional political establishment to fashion a modified form of the National Pact. Although the Constitutional Document reserved the presidential office for the Maronites, the primary aim of the statement was to redistribute political power in Lebanon in a more balanced fashion. The main points of the Document included a redistribution of the seats in Parliament upon an equal basis between the Christian minority population and the Muslim majority, a decentralisation of the bureaucracy and the election of the Prime Minister by the Chamber of Deputies. Although these proposals implied a diminution of the power of the Christian presidency and the viability of Muslim participation in Parliament, the Constitutional Document did not satisfy the demands of the LNM. The main failing of the Document was that it did not seek to transform Lebanon on an egalitarian and non-sectarian basis; rather, it tried to redefine the existing political order upon a new foundation.

On 11 March, an attempted coup d'état was launched at a television studio in Beirut. The leader of the coup attempt was a Sunni Brigadier, Aziz al-Ahdab who immediately called for the resignation of President Frangieh. Although the Constitutional Document had included some concessions to Jumblatt, the fundamental logic of the statement had continued to alienate Muslim opinion. The Muslims wanted radical political change, not institutional innovation. The Constitutional Document appeared to the Muslims as indicative of Frangieh's misconception of the radicals' position. The clamour for the President's resignation gained momentum as Frangieh appeared to be the main obstacle to peace and reconciliation. Although the Kataeb and the National Liberal Party continued to support Frangieh, an overwhelming majority in Parliament called for the President's resignation.

On 23 March, Jumblatt forces launched an artillery barrage upon the presidential palace. Despite the ferocity of the campaign to remove him, President Frangieh refused to relinquish his office, or modify his position. Frangieh was determined to serve the remainder of his term with the military assistance of Gemayel and Chamoun and the diplomatic support of President Assad. On 25 March, Kamal Jumblatt visited Syria to discuss Frangieh's position with President Assad. Although Jumblatt was prepared to tolerate Assad's



diplomatic support for Frangieh, he was suspicious of possible Syrian military intervention. Since January, units of the pro-Syrian Palestinian Saïqa organisation had operated inside Lebanon, and Jumblatt was concerned that these forces should not be used to support Frangieh.

On 31 March, the United States' envoy Dean Brown arrived in Beirut to mediate. On 15 April, a French delegation led by Maurice Couvre de Murville arrived in Lebanon in another effort to find a political resolution to the military stalemate.<sup>15</sup> Both initiatives failed because neither envoy was able to operate within a favourable environment of compromise. The conflict had assumed yet another dimension. Initially, the origins of the crisis can be traced to the ideological conflict within Lebanese society and the interference of outside powers. Secondly, through the continuation of the war, the civil war had assumed a sectarian nature. And, thirdly, the struggle against President Frangieh not only involved a clash of personalities, but threatened to embroil Syria.

On 24 April, under pressure from the Chamber of Deputies, President Frangieh gave his assent to a decree which permitted the holding of a presidential election before August. Although Frangieh's actions may appear to be a concession to his opponents, the President believed that this move would reduce the pressure upon him to resign and that in all probability he could maintain his position until the formal end of his term in office. The search to find a successor to Suleiman Frangieh then began in earnest. The election campaign was essentially a test of the relative influence of Syria and the LNM. The Syrian-sponsored candidate for the presidency was Elias Sarkis. A former Governor of the Central Bank and a close aide-de-camp to the Chehabist Presidents during the 1960s, Sarkis appeared to possess the moderate and conciliatory qualities necessary for the presidency. Perhaps more importantly, however, Sarkis was a technocrat and not a traditional politician and as a result possessed no political base within Lebanese politics. He was, therefore, dependent upon his primary sponsor, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria. The candidate supported by the LNM was Raymond Eddé. Although Eddé was allied to Saeb Salam and Rashid Karami, Jumblatt endorsed his candidature. Jumblatt recognised that although Eddé represented part of the traditional political establishment, he was, perhaps, the only prominent Maronite politician who retained links with the Muslims.

On 9 May 1976, the Chamber of Deputies convened to elect the successor to Suleiman Frangieh; a majority of the votes cast were in favour of Elias Sarkis. Immediately, President-elect Sarkis called for a conference to debate the conflict. Jumblatt, baulked by the victory of Sarkis, rejected the overtures of the President-elect. The response of the LNM was to renew the military offensive. The Jumblattist forces advanced through the Metn towards the strategic Beirut-Damascus highway which linked the régime in the Lebanese capital to their Syrian sponsors. Although Jumblatt claimed that 'I had instigated the battle

in the Mountain, the sole aim of which was to cut the Gordian knot and put an end to the dirty trench warfare in Beirut.<sup>16</sup> The Mountain offensive was designed to isolate Frangieh and Sarkis from Assad, and topple the régime in Beirut.

The intensification of Jumblatt's military campaign was also indicative of his increasing desperation. The presidential election had presented Jumblatt with an opportunity to formulate a political solution to the conflict. The defeat of Raymond Eddé and the triumph of Syrian political intrigue appeared to have revealed Jumblatt's diminishing room for manoeuvre. Furthermore, as the Mountain offensive was designed to topple the régime in Beirut it inevitably involved greater risks for Jumblatt. As the LNM and their Palestinian allies advanced into the Maronite heartland, their offensive threatened to unite the entire Christian population of East Beirut and the Metn behind the uncompromising Kataeb Party. The offensive also involved a more immediate risk - the possible intervention of Syria. In this respect at least, Jumblatt's gamble was miscalculated. The Jumblattists apparently held the advantage. The LNM surrounded East Beirut and appeared poised to launch an attack against the beleaguered Maronite enclave, and impose a new régime over Lebanon.

On 1 June 1976, Syria invaded Lebanon. The invasion was a deliberate attempt by Syria to pre-empt an expected LNM-Palestinian assault upon East Beirut. Jumblatt interpreted the Syrian intervention as an attempt to deny the LNM an absolute victory. Jumblatt protested to Syrian President Assad 'I beg you to withdraw the troops you have sent into Lebanon. Carry on with your political intervention, your mediation, your arbitration ... But I must advise you against military means. We want to be independent'.<sup>17</sup> Although the erstwhile nationalist Christians welcomed the Syrian invasion, the avowedly pan-Arab Kamal Jumblatt castigated Assad's action. The leader of the LNM later asserted that 'Lebanon offered the Syrians the opportunity they needed, the chance to appear as the negotiators par excellence, the 'solvers' of the Lebanese problem. President Assad saw himself as the man of the moment'.<sup>18</sup> To examine the credibility of Jumblatt's judgement, some reference should be made to the concerns of the Syrian President.

The motivation for direct Syrian military intervention was complicated by Syria's dual role in the region. In a geo-political context, the Syrians wanted to be viewed as a regional power. The Lebanese crisis did provide Syria with an opportunity to act as a guardian, but it also involved wider strategic concerns. The Syrians were anxious to forestall any possible Israeli involvement in the conflict. An Israeli intervention in support of the Maronites might have worsened Syria's strategic position; Syria had lost the strategically important Golan Heights in 1967, and Israeli encroachment into Lebanon could have rendered the Syrian military posture untenable. In this respect, the Syrian intervention can be viewed as an attempt to restrict the potential danger of the crisis. The Israelis recognised

that the Syrian invasion represented a crude form of crisis-management, but remained wary. As a representative of the Israeli government put it: 'its their tea party at the moment ... If the situation eventually turns against us, we'll cope with it then. But we are not going to hasten the day by intervening one minute before we have to.'<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the strategic position of Syria, Assad was concerned with the possible impact of the Lebanese crisis inside Syria. The ruling Ba'thist regime in Damascus had been prone to internal factionalism - often based upon sectarian or regional allegiances - and Assad was anxious to minimise sectarianism in the Levant. He was apprehensive about the possible implications of a total victory for the LNM, in which the Sunnis had played an active role. As an Alawite Muslim, Assad was concerned about a reawakening of the dormant political power of the Sunni community in Syria. In this context, Syrian intervention in Lebanon was, in part, determined by the domestic political concerns of President Assad.

The justification for Syria's intervention was contrived in terms of pan-Arabism. The Syrian leader told Kamal Jumblatt that 'for me, this is an historic opportunity to re-orient the Maronites towards Syria, to win their trust, to make them realize that their source of protection is no longer France or the West.'<sup>20</sup> The basis of Assad's overture to the Maronites had been strengthened by the Syrian President's close ties with President Suleiman Frangieh of Lebanon. The two old friends had co-operated for the election to the presidency of Elias Sarkis, and Assad felt confident that he would be able to build upon this alliance and gain the support of Gemayel and Chamoun.

On 8 June 1976, a conference of the foreign ministers of the Arab League convened in Cairo. The Syrian intervention in Lebanon had aroused suspicion throughout the Arab world, and several Arab régimes were concerned that their client political movements should not suffer as a result of Syria's action. Inside Lebanon, the Syrian invasion was resisted by the LNM and units of the PLO. Several Arab states voiced their concern about inter-Arab warfare while Israel remained secure. In particular, Saudi Arabia was anxious that the PLO should not be destroyed, and that the Arafat wing of the PLO should remain outside Syrian control and act as an independent military and political entity. The conference called for a cease-fire and raised the possibility of an Arab peace-keeping force. The Syrians had presented the Arab League with a *fait accompli*; despite their concerns, the Arab states had to recognise that the Syrian armed forces were the only readily available means of ending the conflict.

The invasion heralded renewed Syrian efforts to negotiate a solution to the civil conflict. On 18 July, a delegation from the Kataeb Party visited Damascus to discuss the situation in Lebanon. This visit was followed by a meeting with Palestinian representatives on 21 July 1976. The resulting accord was related to the continued presence of the PLO in Lebanon. The terms of the agreement

provided for a disengagement of Syrian and Palestinian forces, and an assurance that the PLO would be permitted to operate from Lebanon. For the Syrian peace-makers, the agreement effectively removed a major participant from the conflict. The agreement secured a commitment from the Palestinians that the PLO would assume a non-aligned stance in Lebanon and that they would not oppose Syria's attempt to end the crisis.

Although in principle the PLO had agreed to withdraw from the conflict, in practice the Palestinians found it difficult to escape from their confused and vulnerable position. In particular, the PLO could not disengage their forces from the defence of the refugee camps without risking a substantial number of civilian casualties. On 29 June, the Maronite militias captured the refugee camp at Jisr al-Basha and during August the Shi'ite stronghold at Nabaa fell. The only remaining sector of East Beirut outside the control of the Lebanese Front was the large Palestinian refugee camp at Tel al-Zaatar. The position of the besieged camp was now untenable, and on 11 August, the PLO agreed to an evacuation of Tel al-Zaatar. Although women and younger children were permitted through to West Beirut, those male Palestinians suspected by the Maronite forces of being combatants were killed. Although the surrender of Tel al-Zaatar extricated the PLO from the conflict in Lebanon, it cost an estimated 1,500 lives.<sup>21</sup>

On 23 September 1976, Elias Sarkis assumed the presidency of Lebanon. As he entered office, the Syrians launched an offensive against the LNM and its shrinking band of Palestinian allies. The Saudis - determined to prevent a humiliation and possible destruction of the PLO - called for a meeting in Riyadh. The Riyadh talks provided for an armistice between the PLO and the Syrians, and called for the creation of a broader-based and more assertive Arab peace-keeping force for Lebanon. At a summit conference held at Cairo, the Arab League ratified the Riyadh communiqué. The new peace-keeping force for the Lebanon was designated as the 'Arab Deterrent Force' and allocated a detachment of 30,000 troops. Although the Cairo summit may be viewed as an attempt to involve the Arab world in a rescue mission for Lebanon, the pronouncements made in Cairo relied upon the fragile notion of pan-Arab co-operation. The Cairo communiqué could not disguise the dominant position of Syria in Lebanon; out of the original detachment of 30,000 troops for the ADF at least 22,000 were Syrians.<sup>22</sup> In this respect, the Cairo summit merely legitimised the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and although it can be interpreted as ending the civil war in Lebanon, it also initiated a new age of subjugation for the Lebanese.



## Notes

1. Hurewitz, 1969
2. *New York Times*, 29 May 1975
3. *Financial Times*, 3 June 1975
4. It should be noted that Zghorta and Tripoli are in close proximity
5. Odeh, 1985, 138
6. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party appears to have changed its its basic political stance since 1958. The SSNP was no longer a nationalist party, but had adopted a position more identifiable with the Left
7. Cobban, 1985, 129
8. *New York Times*, 22 September 1975
9. *New York Times*, 21 September 1975
10. Gorla, 1985, 206
11. Odeh, 1985, 146
12. *The Times*, 8 January 1976
13. *Egyptian Gazette*, 8 January 1976
14. *Financial Times*, 9 January 1976
15. Maurice Couvre de Murville was a former Prime Minister of France during the Fifth Republic
16. Joumblatt, 1982, 15
17. Joumblatt, 1982, 19
18. Joumblatt, 1982, 73
19. *New York Times*, 16 June 1976
20. Joumblatt, 1982, 81
21. Cobban, 1985, 142
22. Cobban, 1985, 144

## 6. THE SUBJUGATION OF LEBANON: DOMESTIC CONFLICT AND FOREIGN DESIGNS, 1976 - 1982

On 24 December 1976, the Chamber of Deputies passed a vote of confidence in the government formed by Lebanon's new Prime Minister, Selim al-Hoss. The composition of the Hoss cabinet reflected the neo-Chehabist nature of the Sarkis régime. And, although the government justified its approach in terms of national reconciliation, the authority of the administration was founded upon the Syrian armed presence in Lebanon.

The Syrian invasion of Lebanon signified the effective subordination of Lebanon's territorial and political sovereignty, but it was essentially a limited exercise. Although Damascus intended to end the conflict in Lebanon, the Syrians did not possess enough freedom of manoeuvre to impose their will completely. The primary obstacle to complete Syrian hegemony over Lebanon was Israel. Israel permitted Syria's intervention because it viewed Syrian entanglement in Lebanon as a drain on the energies of the most hostile 'frontline' state. The Israeli government believed that Damascus would be so preoccupied in Lebanon that it could be, albeit temporarily, diverted away from the Arab-Israeli dispute and the question of the Golan Heights. The Israelis apparently arrived at a *modus vivendi* with the Syrian occupation forces in Lebanon. They were concerned to restrict the military potential of Syria on Israel's northern flank, and during 1976 signalled to Damascus the limits of their tolerance. Subsequently, the agreement on a 'Red Line' beyond which Syrian troops would not advance served as the fundamental groundrule for both Syrian and Israeli policy in Lebanon. Although the 'Red Line' was interpreted as reaching 25 miles north of the Israeli border, Damascus was wary about the military posture it assumed in southern Lebanon because of the tacit nature of the understanding.

The intervention of Syria represented the single most important development in Lebanon since the withdrawal of the Allied occupation forces, forty years before. Although Lebanon had experienced internal conflict and appeared close to disintegration, the Lebanese had maintained a relatively free and open political system. The Syrian presence redefined politics in Lebanon; not only were the Lebanese denied their sovereignty, but Syria sought to fashion a new political order for Lebanon, and here the régime of Elias Sarkis encountered its fundamental weakness - its dependency upon an external guardian. Another failing of the Sarkis régime was its misconception of the political system in Lebanon. President Sarkis hoped to resurrect the discredited Chehabist practice of uniting the extremes in one government. This ambitious strategy was

sabotaged by two crucial developments: the assassination of Kamal Jumblatt and the subsequent disintegration of his revolutionary coalition; and the rising influence of Bashir Gemayel.

The assassination of Kamal Jumblatt, in 1977, was of major importance. Although the LNM had not secured victory in the civil war, the position of Jumblatt was not brought into question by the loose coalition of radical Arabist and revolutionary groups which Jumblatt led. The Druze leader was the dominant personality in the LNM, and his radical political stance together with the absence of a major rival had cemented his role as leader of the coalition. With his death, the linchpin of the coalition was removed and, denied a dominant personality which pulled them together, the various radical groups moved apart. Without the flowing rhetoric of Kamal Jumblatt, several members of the LNM increasingly resorted to sectarianism. In particular, the Shi'ites appear to have taken this opportunity to formulate their own political identity and objectives. Altogether, the Muslim-Leftist coalition appeared in 1977 to be close to disintegration and descent into political obscurity.

In contrast, the Maronite alliance was increasingly dominated by a new personality with a more ambitious strategy. Bashir Gemayel, second son of Pierre Gemayel, represented a new force within the Maronite community. In August 1976, Bashir Gemayel had been entrusted by the older generation of Maronite politicians with the leadership of the co-ordinated Maronite militias, the 'Lebanese Forces'. Unlike his father and elder brother, Bashir Gemayel invariably preferred a military solution to political problems, and in 1976, Bashir had demonstrated his ambition by removing Raymond Eddé from the political scene. An attack upon Eddé's residence at Byblos proved sufficient to persuade Eddé to leave Lebanon. This was a calculated manoeuvre by Bashir Gemayel. Eddé represented the first and easiest target for Bashir in his drive for absolute power over the Maronite community. The relative moderation shown by Eddé during the civil war had not endeared the son of Lebanon's first President to many Maronites, and had estranged him from the other leading Maronite politicians. His political vulnerability within the Maronite community was matched by another fundamental weakness: unlike the other Maronite leaders, Raymond Eddé did not possess a subservient militia. His failure to develop his own militia robbed Eddé of his political credibility and left him open to attack.

Bashir Gemayel sought to assert his will over the Maronite community by means of the Kataeb militia. Like his father, Bashir Gemayel tended towards authoritarianism as a means of social and political control, but whereas Pierre Gemayel had adopted a political approach with the formation of the Kataeb Party, Bashir regarded the fundamental political unit in Lebanon to be not the political party, but the militia organisation. Utilising the Kataeb militia as his organisational infrastructure, Bashir Gemayel sought to penetrate the entire

fabric of Maronite life in East Beirut and the Metn. The Bashir-controlled Kataeb militia inaugurated a network of rudimentary services for the Maronite enclave providing food, transportation and subsidised medical care. In effect, Bashir Gemayel sought to replace the formal but ineffectual administration in East Beirut with an organisation controlled by the Kataeb. In this respect, the rise of Bashir Gemayel also contained an implicit threat to the role and position of the formal government.

On 28 March 1977, President Sarkis nominated Brigadier Victor Khoury as commander of the Lebanese army, and this choice represented the first step towards national reconciliation by the Sarkis regime. Brigadier Khoury was respected by the leading Muslim politicians and his appointment was designed to conciliate Muslim apprehensions, but although he was acceptable to the Muslims, the Kataeb militia objected to his appointment. Following a bomb attack upon the residence of the Minister of Defence, Bashir Gemayel called for a strike in East Beirut against the government. The younger Gemayel's aggressive stance provoked criticism from his father who was anxious to cooperate with the Sarkis régime. The strike became a test of the relative power between Bashir and Pierre Gemayel. Characteristically, Bashir Gemayel adopted a militaristic approach, and dispatched his militia units onto the streets to enforce his dictate. This power-play was significant because it represented a new departure for Bashir Gemayel. The strike proved that he was prepared to act independently and possessed sufficient power to impose his will in Maronite-controlled East Beirut.

The primary consequence of the March 1977 strike was the estrangement of Bashir Gemayel from his father. Subsequently, Bashir Gemayel turned not only toward the reinforcement of his position but to the creation of a series of new alliances. He approached ex-President Camille Chamoun, and together they began to develop an extreme version of Maronitism. Bashir also looked beyond the traditional political establishment inside the Maronite community; he was conscious of the desirability of constructing a new Christian power-structure around his position. Bashir sought to monopolise the lower-middle class and working class political constituency in Christian East Beirut; he recruited supporters from this newly-politicised stratum, and used his power of patronage to promote his protégés. Once Bashir had created his political base in Maronite-dominated East Beirut, he turned to the wider Christian political constituency in Lebanon. This re-definition of Bashir Gemayel's frame of reference was part of his long-term plan for Lebanon. Although the Christians represented a minority of the total Lebanese population, Bashir Gemayel was determined to re-assert Maronite primacy, and implicitly Christian domination, over Lebanon.

The political, diplomatic and military environment within which Bashir Gemayel operated did not preclude a drive toward the reassertion of Christian power in Lebanon. Although sectarian animosity pervaded Lebanon, a large



proportion of the Muslim population still looked to traditional political figures who accepted the National Pact as the basis of the Lebanese polity. In this respect, the traditional Muslim establishment misconceived the true nature of Bashir Gemayel's Maronitism; he did not envisage the Maronite community as 'primus inter pares' but omnipotent. Bashir was also favoured by the subordination of Lebanon to outside forces. The Syrian intervention had rescued the Maronites from the Jumblattist coalition, and after 1976 Israel also took an active role in support of the Maronite Christians. During 1976-77, the northern border of Israel was opened to the impoverished southern Lebanese. Although the 'good fence' policy had cost '14 million by August 1977',<sup>1</sup> it tended to make the Lebanese on the border dependent upon Israel. This economic relationship was developed by the Israelis into a political and military understanding. In return for local Shi'ite and Maronite cooperation against Palestinian guerrilla units, Israel would maintain the 'good fence' and supply the Lebanese with military materiel and training.

The development of a form of dependency upon Israel in southern Lebanon had important ramifications for politics in Lebanon. As a result of this patron-client relationship, a Maronite-dominated militia designated the 'South Lebanese Army' (SLA) was established by a renegade Major, Saad Haddad, to patrol the Lebanese side of the border. The formation of the SLA attracted the support of Bashir Gemayel, because although the SLA served as a surrogate to a foreign sponsor, Bashir identified Major Haddad as a potential ally. Israel had provided the Lebanese Forces with assistance during the civil war, and Bashir saw an alliance with Saad Haddad as a useful manoeuvre to involve Israel further in Lebanon. He welcomed Israel's entanglement with Haddad. In the short-term, he encouraged Israeli support for the SLA, because it obstructed the Palestinian military presence in Lebanon. However, from a more long-term perspective, Bashir hoped to manipulate Israeli involvement in Lebanon. He recognised that his vision of a Christian-dominated Lebanon was not a realistic proposition, given the demographic and sectarian nature of the population. The only possible option for Bashir Gemayel was to obstruct internal politics in Lebanon and internationalise the Lebanese conflict.

The increased prominence of the south on the political agenda provided Bashir Gemayel with an opportunity to move publicly closer to Israel. Through the 'Shtaura agreement' of July 1977, the Lebanese and Syrian governments and the PLO agreed upon a basis for the regulation of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. The Lebanese Forces together with the SLA rejected a subsequent call to demobilise their militias. The true *raison d'être* for the Christian militias was exposed; these organisations had not been conceived simply to prevent a Palestinian take-over in Lebanon, but were designed as part of a plan to suppress the Muslim population and defend Maronite supremacy. Bashir used the opportunity

presented by the Shtaura agreement to align the Lebanese Forces closer with the SLA, and implicitly, with Israel. As part of this move, he provided the SLA with assistance against Palestinian guerrilla units operating near to the border with Israel. In effect, although the SLA provided a useful smokescreen, the Lebanese Forces were allied with Israel.

On 11 March 1978, a Palestinian commando unit penetrated Israel's border security and killed thirty-one Israelis. On 14 March, in response to the attack, Israel launched an invasion of Lebanon up to the Litani river. The Israeli operation was designed to destroy the military infrastructure established by the Palestinians in southern Lebanon. Although the Israelis intended to punish the Palestinians, their invasion was also designed to make the entire population of southern Lebanon aware of the cost of having a Palestinian armed presence there. The Israeli invasion resulted in 2,000 Lebanese casualties although only 400 Palestinians and 24 Israelis were killed.<sup>2</sup> The Israeli attack left the south ravaged; much property in the battlezone was destroyed and crops were damaged. The south had become, in effect, another arena in which non-Lebanese political rivalries were played out. The victims of this struggle between Palestinians and Israelis were the Lebanese; a mass migration of refugees fled from the invasion zone to the coastal towns and to the capital.

The Israeli invasion of March 1978 represented a significant turning-point for Lebanon for three main reasons. First, although Israel had launched retaliatory raids into Lebanon before, the invasion amounted to an important escalation of Israel's role in Lebanon. Secondly, and closely connected with the Israeli action, was the passive posture adopted by Syria. Damascus apparently viewed southern Lebanon as a 'side-show' compared to Beirut, and, because Syria did not possess either the military might or the will to confront Israel, it preferred to remain 'neutral' and protect its own position in Lebanon. In doing so, Syria conceded a future role for Israel in Lebanon. In this sense, there existed between 1978-1982 a tacit Syrian-Israeli condominium over Lebanon. Thirdly, the Israeli invasion gave new impetus to a political transformation already underway in Lebanon - the rise of the Shi'ites.

The emergence of an assertive Shi'ite political consciousness was not simply a by-product of the civil war. The origins of a separate Shi'ite cause can be traced to the Chehabist period. The Deuxieme Bureau, as part of the Chehabist campaign against the traditional Muslim establishment, had sponsored both radicals and Shi'ite Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>3</sup> Initially, Shi'ite disaffection with the political and economic system was manifested in support for the communists. A large proportion of the Jumblattist forces during the civil war were composed of Shi'ites. At this stage, most politically-active Shi'ites were concerned primarily with political change based on an egalitarian and secular ideology. Together with the Palestinians, it had been the Shi'ites in East Beirut who had confronted the

Maronite militias during the civil war. The resistance of the Shi'ites in Beirut produced a more potent form of community and sectarian identity. The effects of the civil war redefined the scope of Lebanese politics: the fundamental political community was no longer the nation, but the local sectarian population. This change in the frame of political reference produced a major transformation within the Shi'ite community. They withdrew from a nationalist, egalitarian and secular approach back into a sectarian mentality.

The emergence of a distinct Shi'ite political movement can be traced to the preparedness of the Shi'ite religious establishment to undertake a more overt political role, and to the charismatic leadership of Musa Sadr. In 1968, the Shi'ite clerical establishment had assured greater power for itself over the Shi'ite community by securing government recognition for the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council.<sup>4</sup> This move separated the entire Shi'ite community from the Sunni-dominated Higher Islamic Council; in so doing it liberated the Shi'ites from Sunni religious dogma, and implicitly, from Sunni political dictates. The campaign for greater Shi'ite religious autonomy in Lebanon was led by the Shi'ite cleric, Musa Sadr, who, in 1974, had formed the 'Movement of the Deprived' to voice Shi'ite political disaffection. Although Sadr presented his cause as radical, he operated as a conservative. He was concerned that Jumblatt should not monopolise the Shi'ite political constituency, and with Syrian support created the 'Movement of the Deprived' as a countervailing force within the Shi'ite community.

The civil war gave greater impetus to a distinct Shi'ite political movement. During 1975, Sadr reinforced the 'Movement of the Deprived' with a military organisation, the 'Lebanese Resistance Battalions'. His decision to form a Shi'ite militia organisation showed his willingness not only to defend the Shi'ites from the Maronite militias, but to compete with his political rivals inside the Shi'ite community and within the Jumblattist coalition. The Shi'ite community and within the Jumblattist coalition. The Shi'ite community emerged from the conflict divided between Jumblatt's LNM and Sadr's militia organisation, now described as 'hope' - *Amal*. The crucial turning-point for *Amal* was the disappearance of Musa Sadr while on a visit to Libya during August 1978.

The loss of the leading Shi'ite political figure generated further changes within the Shi'ite political community. The departure of Sadr heralded the emergence of a new leadership for *Amal*. The clerical-orientated leadership established by Sadr was replaced by a new type of Shi'ite politician. Whereas the Shi'ite community had before been largely dominated by ideologues, rural notables or clerics, the new generation of Shi'ite leaders were essentially urban professionals.

The move of Shi'ite opinion in favour of *Amal* was part of a major re-orientation inside the Lebanese Shi'ite community. Although Musa Sadr's political stance was not universally endorsed within the Shi'ite sect, he was a respected cleric and his apparent death antagonised Shi'ite religious sentiment. The disappearance of Sadr in revolutionary Libya added to a growing disillusionment and distrust with the Left among Lebanese Shi'ites.<sup>5</sup> The Left had not secured the political and economic transformation of Lebanon which many Shi'ites had fought for during the civil war. Furthermore, with the death of Kamal Jumblatt and the apparent disintegration of the LNM, the Left appeared to be too divided and weak to serve as a vehicle for Shi'ite political ambitions. However, the crucial issue about which Shi'ite political consciousness turned was related to the armed Palestinian presence in southern Lebanon. The population of Lebanon's border region with Israel was predominantly Shi'ite. The repeated reprisal raids from Israel had caused increased economic hardship for a population who lived on a largely subsistence economy. A large number of Shi'ites migrated north and in doing so voiced their objection to the provocative Palestinian presence in the south. The Left could not conciliate Shi'ite disaffection; the basis of the Left's strength was contained in its military and political alliance with the Palestinians, and the LNM could not afford to renege upon this relationship. In this respect, the Left miscalculated the mood not only within the Shi'ite sect, but throughout Lebanese society. The Palestinian cause was perceived by an increasing number of non-Maronite Lebanese as a liability.

Dissatisfaction with the Palestinian role in Lebanon came increasingly to the forefront of Muslim politics following the Israeli invasion of 1978. Bashir Gemayel recognised the possible ramifications of a split in Muslim ranks. This division between pro- and anti- Palestinian groups provided Bashir with an opportunity to adopt a more assertive stance and possibly to come to some form of understanding with a significant proportion of Lebanon's Muslim population. Initially, however, Bashir Gemayel sought to strengthen his power over the broader Christian community in Lebanon before approaching the Muslims.

The political *bête noire* which Bashir Gemayel targeted to unite Lebanon's Christians was Syria. Although the Syrians had saved the Maronites of East Beirut from probable defeat, the continued presence of foreign troops on sovereign Lebanese territory antagonised traditionally nationalist Christian opinion. During February 1978, the Syrians clashed with units of the Lebanese army and the Chamounist militia in East Beirut. In retaliation, the Syrian army launched a heavy artillery bombardment of East Beirut. The Syrian barrage against East Beirut appears to have been an over-reaction and politically unsophisticated, since, from this point onwards, Bashir Gemayel was able to justify his subsequent actions against Syria as a defence of vital Lebanese interests. In April 1978, the Lebanese Forces militia confronted the Syrian army in East Beirut. The outcome of the struggle for control over the Christian sector was a Syrian withdrawal and their



replacement by Sudanese and Saudi units of the ADF. The removal of Syrian forces from the streets of East Beirut represented a political as well as military victory for Bashir Gemayel. The new contingent of ADF peacekeepers, unlike their Syrian counterparts, posed no threat to his position. As a result of the February-April clashes of 1978, East Beirut became a virtual mini-state dominated by the Lebanese Forces and its leader, Bashir Gemayel.

The Kataeb victory during the April clashes with the Syrians demonstrated Bashir's determination to challenge the Syrian presence in Lebanon. The first target of his aggressive policy was the pro-Syrian camp of Suleiman Frangieh, which he viewed as the basis of Syria's political position in Lebanon. Moreover, Frangieh wielded considerable influence over many Maronites of the northern Metn, and if Bashir Gemayel was to dominate the entire Maronite sect in Lebanon, he would have either to subordinate or to remove Suleiman Frangieh from his prominent position inside the Maronite community. On 13 June 1978, a Lebanese Forces militia detachment stormed the Frangieh family residence at Ehdene killing Tony Frangieh, his wife and child. Whether the assassination of Tony Frangieh was preconceived or the result of a miscalculation is difficult to judge. The attack did not reduce Suleiman Frangieh to subordination, and in this respect the entire operation failed to achieve its primary political goal. The result was that Suleiman Frangieh reinforced his ties with Syria, left the Lebanese Front and led the northern Maronites away from Bashir Gemayel.

The assassination of Tony Frangieh represented a new stage in Maronite politics. Although political violence was common in Lebanon, by convention, leading political figures were regarded as inviolable. The killing of Tony Frangieh demonstrated Bashir Gemayel's readiness to disregard the conventional practice of politics, and pursue his confrontational approach. Although Bashir Gemayel had raised the stakes in his struggle for control over the Maronite sect, he was able to maintain his dominance over the Maronite community by simultaneously mobilising anti-Syrian sentiment in East Beirut. In July, LF militias launched an assault against the remaining vestiges of the Syrian presence in East Beirut. The Maronite offensive proved highly successful for Bashir Gemayel. The LF attack achieved not only a military victory, but significant political gains. The Syrian withdrawal from East Beirut was combined with an indiscriminate artillery barrage against the Maronite enclave: an action which again showed the political naivety of the Syrians. The Syrian bombardment legitimised Bashir Gemayel's stance as the personification of anti-Syrian Maronitism. On 15 October 1978, an Arab conference at Beiteddine formally renewed the Syrian mandate over Lebanon, although the Syrians were obliged to recognise the virtual autonomy of East Beirut.

Although Bashir Gemayel emerged from the clashes with Syria as the leading Maronite politician, he did not enjoy absolute power in East Beirut - his most significant obstacle in this respect was the National Liberal Party (NLP), led by

ex-President Camille Chamoun. Although the Chamounists were less powerful than either the Kataeb Party or the LF militia, they represented a significant independent political and military force in East Beirut and, as such, symbolised resistance to Bashir Gemayel. On 7 July 1980, LF militiamen attacked the bases of the smaller Chamounist militia - the 'Tigers'. The assault upon the 'Tigers' indicated a more careful and sophisticated political approach by Bashir Gemayel, for, unlike the Ehdene incident, the LF militiamen made sure that the heir apparent to a rival faction, Dany Chamoun, was not in the area when the attack was launched. Although Bashir Gemayel realized that the assault upon the 'Tigers' would generate hostile reaction from the NLP, he believed that this would be transient and that the Chamounists would be forced by circumstances into a more dependent relationship.

On 16 July 1980, Prime Minister Selim al-Hoss resigned. The neo-Chehabist régime had shown itself incapable of forming a representative government based upon consensus, and impotent in the face of violence on the streets of the capital. On 20 July, Takiyeddine Solh accepted an offer to resume the premiership, only to resign on 11 August without forming a government. President Sarkis was unable to recruit a major Sunni politician able to form a representative administration based on consensus. Finally on 22 October 1980, President Sarkis managed to appoint Chafik al-Wazzan as Prime Minister. Although Wazzan was expected to lead a government, he was not a leading Sunni politician and his claim to political office was based upon his standing in the Sunni community as head of the Higher Islamic Council. The choice of Wazzan was resisted by the leading Shi'ite politicians, who interpreted Wazzan's appointment as prejudicial to the political and religious position of Shi'ites in Lebanon. On 6 December, four Shi'ite members of the government were obliged to resign after Shi'ite agitation against the Wazzan Cabinet. These resignations demonstrated not only lack of confidence in the Wazzan administration, but also the increased prominence of Shi'ite radicalism.

The rise of Shi'ite radicalism was not simply an internal political development peculiar to Lebanon. Although the basic momentum of Shi'ite ambition derived from conditions inside Lebanon, events abroad provided greater impetus for radicalism within the Shi'ite sect. The Iranian Revolution of January 1979 represented a watershed for Shi'ites throughout the Middle East. The Shi'ite clergy, albeit in coalition with secular political parties, emerged during the Revolution as the leading political force. Increasingly, as the Shi'ite Islamic fundamentalists, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, came to dominate the Revolution, many Lebanese Shi'ites saw Iran as a model for Lebanon. They perceived the Revolution as a crusade against a corrupt and illegitimate regime; and for those Shi'ites who chafed under Maronite-Sunni government, a radical approach rapidly began to appear more attractive. Although the Iranian Revolution did represent a major breakthrough for Shi'ite radicalism, its importance should not be overestimated. The significance of a radical Shi'ite régime in Iran, apart from its psychological importance, was less

relevant than other issues internal to Lebanon. Although the Iranian Revolution could be presented by *Amal* or the other Shi'ite political groups as a standard-bearer for the Shi'ite cause, most Lebanese Shi'ites realized that Lebanon differed fundamentally from Iran.

The foremost embodiment of Lebanese Shi'ite political ideology to emerge during this period was *Amal*, which had been established by Musa Sadr to counter Kamal Jumblatt's popularity within the Shi'ite sect, and had developed rapidly from its rather unsophisticated origins. The rise of *Amal* can be interpreted as proof of the determination of Lebanon's Shi'ites to assert their own sectarian interests and establish an independent position. The majority of Shi'ites had only emerged from neo-feudal politics during the Chehabist period, and had rapidly become supporters of Jumblatt. Their main concerns related to the economic development of rural Lebanon and a reappraisal of their political power.<sup>6</sup> These two political themes survived the defeat of Jumblatt and found new expression in *Amal*. The success of *Amal* must in part be attributed to its dual nature; it was both a militia and a political organisation. Its fundamental *raison d'être* was not ideology or parochial economic interests, but the defence of Shi'ites in Lebanon. In this fashion *Amal* acted as a 'Volkspartei' maximising its political base throughout the Shi'ite population. The most conspicuous demonstration of *Amal's* preoccupation could be seen in its increased assertiveness in the South during 1979-1982, when, eager to stop Israeli reprisal strikes into Lebanon, *Amal* openly engaged in a policy of direct military confrontation with Palestinian commando units operating in the border region.

In central Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel was embarked upon a campaign to force a further Syrian withdrawal. During March 1981, LF militiamen attacked Syrian troops stationed around Zahleh. Bashir Gemayel's interest in Zahleh was indicative of his broader scheme for Lebanon, for although Zahleh was largely inhabited by Greek Catholic Christians, it was regarded as being outside LF control and sympathetic to Syria. Humiliation of Syria at Zahleh by the LF would have signalled to all of Lebanon's Christian communities that Syria was no longer determined to maintain its position as guardian of the Christians and obstruct Bashir Gemayel. Zahleh was also important in a strategic context: - as the major town overlooking the Beqaa valley, the town symbolized the balance of military power in the middle of Lebanon. In this respect, Bashir was also challenging the Syrian position in Lebanon. He appeared prepared to confront Syria over the Beqaa because he believed he would be supported by Israel.

The Zahleh operation was probably designed by Bashir Gemayel for diplomatic reasons rather than internal political motives. Although the Beqaa valley was politically symbolic, its value lay in its strategic importance. Syria had stationed surface-to-air missiles in the Beqaa against Israeli attack and Bashir Gemayel recognised their military and political relevance. The LF-Syrian clashes at Zahleh therefore assumed greater significance, involving Syrian-Israeli military strategy.

If the attack on Zahleh was designed by Bashir to provoke a Syrian reaction and an Israeli over-reaction, it failed, because the United States intervened by sending Philip Habib to Lebanon in order to mediate between Bashir and the Syrians. If, on the other hand, the clashes were inspired by Bashir's desire to involve the Americans in Lebanon, it succeeded. He appeared to be close to provoking either American or Israeli action in Lebanon. In this respect, Bashir Gemayel was on the verge of realizing his long-term political strategy by circumventing the old political system in Lebanon.

On 6 June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon. Although Israel's action was presented as a response to continued Palestinian terrorist operations, the invasion was designed to reconstitute the strategic position - and implicitly the political structure - of Lebanon. The Israelis initially designated their goal as the creation of a forty-kilometre-deep *cordon sanitaire* between the border and the Lebanese interior. In this manner, the Israelis defined their target in terms of a limited exercise against the Palestinians. The Israeli government apparently expected the Shi'ite *Amal* militia to fill the vacuum left by the Palestinians, and to function as a surrogate police force acting in Israel's interest. Although the invasion gained ground rapidly, it failed to achieve the primary military objective - to destroy the Palestinian armed presence in southern and central Lebanon. The Palestinians were able to maintain some resistance to the Israeli invasion by retreating in order to regroup. The Israelis realized, only after their invasion was well into the Lebanese interior, that the Palestinians were able to evade Israeli forces because their lines of communication remained intact. Israeli recognition of this military handicap changed the political complexion of the invasion. In order to break the infrastructure of the PLO in the south, Israel was obliged to dismantle the entire edifice established by the Palestinians in Lebanon.

The political and strategic base of the PLO lay in the Muslim sector of the Lebanese capital. And in effect, the Israeli decision to destroy the military presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon committed Israel to an attack upon West Beirut. On 8 June, Israel secured air superiority over Beirut after victory against the Syrian airforce, which led to the Syrian military's withdrawal from Beirut in favour of the Beqaa. In doing so, Syria signalled that although it was about to relinquish its political primacy in Lebanon, Damascus was determined to maintain its fundamental strategic position against Israel. As Syria retreated, Israel looked to the Lebanese to procure the sacrifice of the Palestinians in order to save West Beirut.

On 14 June 1982, President Sarkis announced the creation of a 'National Salvation Committee' (NSC). The committee was comprised of Sarkis, Bashir Gemayel, Walid Jumblatt, the Shi'ite leader Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Wazzan, the Greek Orthodox Fouad Boutros and the Greek Catholic Nasri Maalouf. In this respect, the NSC incorporated not only the leading contemporary political figures, but sought also to include Lebanon's major sectarian groups. The purpose of the



NSC was to fashion some formula for a Palestinian withdrawal from West Beirut which would be politically acceptable for the PLO and permitted by the Israeli military. The NSC was initially unable to find any common basis for a solution to the siege of West Beirut. The PLO together with its Leftist allies and the local Shi'ite *Amal* militia resisted the Israeli advance into West Beirut. By their determined defence of West Beirut, the Palestinians effectively raised the stakes for both Israel and the Lebanese. For the Israelis, a sustained assault upon West Beirut would involve street-fighting and increasingly unacceptable casualties. The Lebanese realized that the price of the continuation of the siege was also unacceptable. In effect, the Palestinians' resistance not only provided the PLO with sufficient political capital to contemplate withdrawal, but also encouraged the Israelis and Lebanese to find a compromise solution.

On 18 August, a plan to facilitate the withdrawal of the PLO from West Beirut was announced. The Palestinians were assured of an unchallenged evacuation by the deployment of a 'Multi-National Force' (MNF) to monitor the withdrawal. On September 1, the evacuation of the PLO was completed, although a number of Palestinian non-combatants remained in Beirut. The removal of the Palestinians' effective presence provided Israel with an opportunity to reconstitute the political system in Lebanon in its favour.

On 24 July, Bashir Gemayel had announced his candidacy for the presidency of Lebanon. The presidential term of Elias Sarkis was due to end on 23 September 1982, and both Bashir and his Israeli sponsors appeared ready to grasp this opportunity to refashion politics in Lebanon. The Israelis could view the election of Bashir Gemayel as a diplomatic triumph. The Gemayel regime would be dependent upon Israel for its survival; and as such, the Israeli government of Menachem Begin believed that it could exert an overwhelming influence over Lebanon. The main diplomatic goal for Israel was to normalise relations with Lebanon. Despite Bashir's protestations, Lebanon was essentially an Arab state, and Israel's conclusion of a formal peace treaty with cordial diplomatic relations would benefit Israel. Through the Camp David Accord of 1977, the Israelis had secured the withdrawal of one major Arab 'frontline' state, Egypt, from active confrontation, and a repeat with Lebanon would reinforce the division of the Arabs.

In this context, the election of Bashir Gemayel to the presidency on 23 August represented a major diplomatic advance for Israel. Although Bashir was aware that Israel possessed ulterior motives, he felt confident that he could remain independent of Israeli control. The retention of the MNF in Lebanon involved the major Western powers and Gemayel felt able to counter Israeli pressure by an appeal to the USA to foster his embryonic régime. Upon his election to the presidency, Bashir Gemayel appeared close to the realization of his long-term political goal. The involvement of Israel and the United States in Lebanon raised the possibility of an enforced solution to the Lebanese problem. The circumvention of the political

system in Lebanon, for which Bashir Gemayel had schemed, was no longer a remote proposition.

On 14 September 1982, a bomb exploded at Kataeb Party head-quarters and killed Bashir Gemayel. The scenario of political change which he had envisaged was abruptly ended, and a new era opened in the political history of Lebanon.

#### Notes

1. *Financial Times*, 26 August 1977
2. Cobban, 1985, 161
3. Cobban, 1985
4. Cobban, 1985, 173
5. Whether revolutionary Libya was Leftist or radical was incidental. The Shi'ites interpreted the Libyan regime as Leftist and it was this perception which undermined Shi'ite ties with the Left
6. For a discussion of Shi'ite political ambitions and tactics, see Nasr, 1985, 10-16

## 7. CONCLUSION

The fundamental argument of this work is that although Lebanon is a recognised state, the Lebanese have not developed as a nation. Nationalism is a political concept originated and developed in Europe. Although Nationalism emerged as a modern ideology, it evolved in part as a result of the early separation of spiritual and temporal power in European polities. Whereas many European countries entered the modern era with a distinct separation between the state and religion, in the Middle East no similar distinction existed. The development of the modern European nation-state raised the state above, and rendered it independent of, religious affiliation. As a result, most Europeans classified themselves according to nationality, not religion. The process of nation-building in Europe generally involved a relative diminution in the political importance of religion.

In the case of Lebanon, this essentially European notion of statehood was imposed upon a 'nation' arbitrarily formed by the European powers. The Lebanese Republic was an innovation. Prior to 1920, the Lebanese were inhabitants of Greater Syria and ruled by the Ottoman government. In the aftermath of the First World War, the Lebanese state was established, and in the creation of the Lebanon, the seeds of later conflict were sown.

The fundamental incoherence of Lebanon was based in the heterogeneous composition of Lebanese society. The Lebanese state encompassed a patchwork of religious and tribal groups, all invariably determined to protect and promote their parochial political and economic interests. The political process reinforced the latent divisions within Lebanon. The government of Lebanon was based upon confessionalism, and the confessional system distributed political office on a fixed and theoretically proportionate basis. The National Pact of 1943 sought to accommodate sectarian parochialism in a national formula of mutual compromise. Although the National Pact may have sufficed as a temporary expedient in the process of nation-building, it could not serve as the basis for the subsequent development of a sophisticated modern democracy. The National Pact was designed as a means of asserting the social and economic power of elites within a political framework; it was not a nationalist manifesto, although it was presented as a declaration of Lebanese independence.

The National Pact represented an attempt to fashion some form of consociational political order. In this manner, the respective elites in Lebanese society could hope to maintain their hold over their political constituencies by their definition of politics in terms of religion-orientated issues. The socio-economic establishment - essentially the rural *zu'ama'* and the urban businessmen - used this

political system to emphasise religious cleavages within society, and to maintain political division amongst the lower strata.

The domination over the political system by socio-economic elites was made possible, in part, by the unsophisticated nature of Lebanese political culture. The European-style, state-orientated political order is based upon the identification of the state as the primary reference point for the population. The state is the focal point about which political and economic interaction revolves and to which social issues are referred. In contrast, Lebanese political culture has been dominated by traditional reference points. The influence of the state is less potent compared with other powerful reference points such as the family, the clan, province or sectarian group. Lebanese society is ordered but not state-dominated.

The Lebanese state is weak, it commands little respect because it is viewed as essentially artificial. The state was established by a foreign power which saw in a strong and autonomous domestic Lebanese government a potential threat to its position. In cooperation with the Lebanese socio-economic elite, the French mandatory authorities formulated a minimal level of government for Lebanon. A separation between government and religious prerogatives was not encouraged; and as a result, the politically active clerics were able to retain their social and political hold over their flocks. The Lebanese state was unable to impose itself upon the population. In this respect, the weakness of the state suited the political designs and economic interests of the Lebanese establishment. The state was subordinate to the establishment; it served as a source of patronage and was used to administer the Lebanese lifestyle, but not to govern the population.

The traditional features of the Lebanese political system were illustrated during the Chamoun Presidency. The establishment retained a suspicion of the state and maintained its hold over the population. Although the crisis of 1958 was, in part, perceived outside Lebanon as a sectarian struggle, it originated primarily as a conflict of interests between President Chamoun and the establishment. The behaviour of Camille Chamoun and his overtly pro-Western policies antagonised a wide spectrum within the Lebanese political elite. The contest between President Chamoun and the United National Front (UNF) was conceived not simply on one political level. The struggle was presented by the opposition as a defence of Lebanon's diplomatic neutrality and internal political stability. The opposition however, interpreted Chamoun's foreign policy as indicative of his ultimate goal to reconstitute the political fabric of Lebanon. Although the UNF justified the status quo in terms of sectarian harmony, in so doing the opposition reaffirmed their political position. In this context, the conflict of 1958 can be viewed as an attempt by a significant proportion of the establishment to maintain their standing, against an aggrandising presidency and the state, and in relation to their political constituencies.



The campaign against the political influence of the traditional Lebanese establishment, although conceived during the Chamoun Presidency, was only realized in the Chehabist period. The formula of government adopted by Presidents Chehab and Helou represented an attempt to rule without the political support of the *zu'ama'*. In order to compensate for the narrowing of the Chehabist administrations' bases of support, the regime incorporated ideology-based political parties into government. This was an ambitious and untried political experiment. The Chehabists essentially attempted to reconstitute politics upon a new basis; the substitution of the Kataeb and the PSP for the *zu'ama'*-dominated political oligarchy represent an effort to modernise Lebanese politics. Chehabism sought to replace the social, economic and political primacy of the *zu'ama'* with etatism, albeit in a mild form.

The inadequacy of Chehabism was contained in its misconception of the solution to the problem of government. The political base constructed by the Chehabists was too narrow and incompatible to provide a framework for nation-building. The Kataeb and the PSP exhibited similar characteristics: both were ideologically-centred political parties and were independent of the traditional political establishment. In this context, a realignment of politics on the basis of a Kataeb-PSP coalition appeared attractive to the Chehabists. However, any compromise between the Kataeb and the PSP could only be transient and largely cosmetic, given their ideological antipathy and sectarian jealousies. This fundamental flaw in the Chehabist experiment was compounded by its tentative adoption of etatism. The Chehabist attempt to assert the primacy of the state provoked opposition from vested economic and political interests, and as a result the scope and effectiveness of state-sponsored initiatives were limited.

The failure of Chehabism can be attributed both to its inherent inadequacy and to the unfavourable international political context within which it operated. Although the Chehabist edifice was prone to collapse, it was events abroad which undermined and sabotaged the fabric of Chehabist government. The Arab-Israeli conflict and the issue of Lebanon's stance polarised Lebanese opinion. This polarisation assumed a sectarian nature because the question of Lebanon's position inevitably involved how the 'Lebanese' saw themselves and their role in regional politics. In general, a political consensus was formed between pan-Arabist sentiment, Muslim disillusionment with the manner of Lebanon's government and the Lebanese radical parties. This grouping, designated the LNM, was led by Kamal Jumblatt.

The Jumblattist challenge represented a threat to the Lebanese political system on two levels. The most obvious challenge made by Jumblatt was against the confessional political order. In the advocacy of political change for Lebanon on a secular basis, Kamal Jumblatt rejected the National Pact and implicitly the primacy of one section of Lebanese society - the Maronite Christians. Although Jumblatt

asserted that a non-sectarian secular state would protect the liberties enjoyed by the minority population, the leading Christian politicians saw Jumblattism as an onslaught upon the Christians' position of prosperity and security. The Jumblattist revolution against the confessional system also represented a rebellion against the traditional political establishment. Since Jumblattism wished to abolish conventional politics, the position of the leadership was brought into question. As a consequence, the Jumblattist programme not only antagonised the Maronite sect, but also undermined the assuredness of the traditional and more conservative Muslim leaders.

The Frangieh regime attempted to forestall Jumblatt with a combination of moderate change and determined leadership. The possibility of success for Frangieh was limited first, by the polarisation of politics, and, secondly, by the isolated position of the Sunni political elite. The question of the Palestinians' armed presence in Lebanon proved too divisive an issue for any lasting compromise to be formulated. In this respect, the stability of Lebanon depended not only on a minimum level of consensus, but also upon the relative quiescence of regional issues over which the Lebanese had no control. The Arab-Israeli dispute and the polarisation of Lebanon militated against conciliation and pushed the Lebanese towards civil war. The traditional Muslim establishment could not compete with Jumblatt for the leadership of the Muslims. Instead, the most prominent Sunni politicians such as Saeb Salam and Rashid Karami retreated from the national political scene and protected their political base. Without a credible balance in the government, the regime appeared to many disaffected Muslims as hostile and illegitimate.

The outbreak of a civil conflict in 1975 can be viewed as an attempt by the Kataeb to enforce a military solution. There was contained in the Kataeb's attack upon the Palestinians an implicit suggestion that the Maronites were acting in defence of the Lebanese state. In retrospect, it appears evident that the Kataeb acted in order to reassert the primacy of the Maronite sect over the political process. If the Kataeb offensive against the Palestinians was designed to generate a Lebanese-Palestinian conflict, it failed. Nationalism was seen by many Muslims and some Christians as a transparent political cliché justifying a defence of the status quo in Lebanon and Maronite supremacy.

The Maronite attempt to destroy the anti-system coalition of Arabist radicals and Muslim revolutionaries through violent confrontation failed. Indeed as the conflict became entrenched, the civil war was redefined as a sectarian struggle. Only the intervention of Syria saved the encircled Christians in East Beirut from the potentially catastrophic onslaught expected from the LNM. The Syrian intervention of 1976 demonstrated the failure of the Maronite gamble for control over Lebanon. Although the Lebanese political order was preserved, Maronite power was defined in terms of Syrian forbearance. The ramifications of Syria's

invasion were not simply confined to internal developments within Lebanon. The intervention of Syria not only effectively subordinated Lebanese politics to the designs of a foreign influence, but pushed Lebanon to the forefront of Syrian-Israeli rivalry.

The subordination of conventional politics in Lebanon resulted in the ascendancy of three political forces independent of traditional influences. As a by-product of Syria's intervention into Lebanese politics, Chehabism was revived. The Sarkis regime, however, possessed more limited objectives than its predecessors. As the *raison d'être* of the Sarkis regime was to provide greater compromise within government, Sarkis tended to avoid a confrontation with some of the more intractable aspects of the Lebanese problem. In this sense, President Sarkis represented a stop-gap figure devoid of anything more than a short-term perspective. In contrast, two sectarian-based political movements, which emerged at the forefront of Lebanon's political scene, following 1976, possessed a more ambitious goal.

The fundamental aim of both radical Shi'ism and extreme Maronitism was to re-orientate politics in Lebanon. The evolution of a separate and assertive Shi'ite political consciousness, although linked to Israel's actions in southern Lebanon, was also attributable to Shi'ite disillusion with the structure of Lebanese politics. The plethora of Shi'ite political groups showed the Shi'ite disaffection with the Lebanese system. Following the subordination of the Leftist-Muslim alliance by Syria, Shi'ite disaffection was transposed from its ideological position into a more sectarian and parochial perspective. Extreme Maronitism, as propagated by Bashir Gemayel, also demonstrated the increased prominence of sectarianism. Both Bashir Gemayel and radical Shi'ism represented a challenge to the conventional structure of Lebanese politics. Bashir rejected the ethos of the National Pact, as did many Shi'ites, but whereas the Shi'ites were concerned with a modification and up-dating of the Lebanese political order, extreme Maronitism aimed to put an effective end to the old political system. Although the Maronist dream was ended in 1982, the Shi'ite vision remained intact.

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